

TIGER LADY



THE AUTHOR ON AN ELEPHANT

TIGER LADY

Adventures in the Indian Jungle

by

OLIVE SMYTHIES



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GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

<i>Ayah.</i>	Indian nurse or maid.
<i>Bhagwan.</i>	A Spirit.
<i>Bearer.</i>	Valet.
<i>Burka.</i>	Veil.
<i>Chikor.</i>	Himalayan partridge.
<i>Chital.</i>	Spotted deer.
<i>Dandy.</i>	Sedan chair.
<i>Dhobi.</i>	Washerman.
<i>Dhoti.</i>	Sheet for wrapping round the legs.
<i>Doolie.</i>	Bed slung on poles.
<i>Dun.</i>	Valley.
<i>Gainder.</i>	Rhinoceros.
<i>Ghat.</i>	River station.
<i>Ghoom.</i>	To wander on an elephant.
<i>Goonch.</i>	Freshwater shark.
<i>Gujbar.</i>	Iron prong.
<i>Gural.</i>	Mountain goat.
<i>Howdah.</i>	Large elephant saddle.
<i>Jhil.</i>	Lake or swamp.
<i>Katola.</i>	Small elephant saddle.
<i>Katra.</i>	Small buffalo.
<i>Kukri.</i>	Nepalese sword.

<i>Langur.</i>	Grey monkey.
<i>Machan.</i>	Seat in a tree.
<i>Mahawat.</i>	Driver of elephants.
<i>Maro.</i>	Kill.
<i>Parha.</i>	Hog deer.
<i>Puja.</i>	Prayer.
<i>Purdah.</i>	Curtain.
<i>Saddhu.</i>	Priest.
<i>Sambar.</i>	Large deer.
<i>Sanai.</i>	Blown-up bullock skin.
<i>Sari.</i>	Female head-dress.
<i>Serow.</i>	Goat antelope.
<i>Sher.</i>	Tiger.
<i>Shikar.</i>	Sport.
<i>Shikari.</i>	Sportsman.
<i>Subha.</i>	Nepalese title.

FOREWORD

THIS book is the story of a life of travel and sport spent in a world which (for British men and women at least) has vanished for ever. Its opening coincides approximately with the pomp and splendour of the great Delhi Durbar of 1911, and the coronation of King George V at New Delhi as Emperor, at the peak of the power of British rule in India; it ends in 1947, the year of final transfer of that power to Indians, and the great exodus of Britons from that Dominion.

The book, however, is not concerned with the rise and fall of the British rule in India, and only to a minor extent with the social life of the period. Primarily it is the story of my own life as the wife of a Forest officer in India.

What is a Forest officer, and what does he do?

"I suppose you plant trees?" is an opening gambit with which a Forest officer becomes familiar early in his career. If he is wise he says "yes" or "no" and changes the subject, for to describe the work of a Forest officer in a few words is impossible. His training covers a wide variety of subjects, based on Natural Science and Mathematics, branching out into Botany, Geology, Zoology, Ecology, Meteorology, Entomology, Mycology, and embracing subjects more directly concerned with forestry such as Silviculture and Management, Forest Engineering and Surveying, Economics and Soil Science. His actual work, however, consists very largely of Administration—sitting in an office checking accounts, dealing with files,

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drawing up contracts, looking after his large subordinate staff (who seem to live in a whirl of burials, marriages and festivals, judging by their leave applications), compiling reports and returns, and interviewing all and sundry, from the clerk who wants a week's leave because "his baby has shuffled its mortal coils", as one applicant put it, to the wealthy contractor who works large areas of the forest. He sometimes plants trees, but more usually nowadays assists nature to grow the trees that are required. He may, at short notice, have to erect a turpentine factory or a trout hatchery, or deal with a telegram from an agitated station-master: "Tiger on platform, traffic disorganised, please arrange."

A Forest officer's job takes him for long tours into the wildest parts of the wild Indian jungles, and his wife goes with him. Taken so far from the beaten roads and the regular stations, he grows wise in more than wood-lore. "He learns to know the people and the polity of the jungle; meeting tiger, bear, leopard, wild-dog, and all the deer. He spends much time in saddle or under canvas—the friend of newly-planted trees, the associate of uncouth rangers and hairy trackers—until the woods, that show his care, in turn set their mark upon him and he grows silent with the silent things of the underbush."

Kipling and others have described what a Forest officer does, but no one has yet attempted to describe what the life of a Forest officer's wife is like. In this book, therefore, I have ventured to give a picture of her duties and her life.

My last seven years in the East, by a lucky chance, were spent in the mysterious, forbidden land of Nepal, touring in the cold weather in unknown tracts where no European had ever been (in fact my husband and I are the

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only Europeans who can claim to have travelled from one end of Nepal to the other), and in the summer months living in the fascinating city of Kathmandu, near "the green eyes of the little yellow God".

These seven years proved intensely interesting, and we were fortunate to spend them in this charming, medieval and peaceful land, unaffected by the Great War which raged over four continents during that period.

Developments in the last few months of 1950 and in 1951 suggest that the system of government in Nepal described on pages 154-5, has been altered and the autocratic rule replaced by something more democratic. It is interesting to note how the two surviving anachronisms of medieval times in the world today, Tibet and Nepal, have simultaneously come under pressure, the former from Communists from the North, the latter from Democracy from the South. Both are equally helpless, the former against military action, the latter against political action and (if necessary) economic sanctions. Although politically Nepal is quite independent, economically it is absolutely dependent on India, and in no position to prevent the replacement of the rule of a "benevolent autocrat" by the rule of a democratic "Constituent Assembly". Whether universal suffrage and the "vote" (and all that that implies) will make this care-free, simple and lovable people any happier is not for me to say. At any rate I have been privileged to live for a time in a country where neither Communism nor Democracy existed, nor the tension between them, and that is a rare experience these days!

Castle Morris,
Tralee, Eire.

OLIVE SMYTHIES

CHAPTER ONE

Early Days in Kumaon

LOOKING back over the many years I spent as the wife of a Forest officer in India, I often wonder if I could have occupied my time in a more happy and pleasant sort of way.

But let me start from the beginning. I was 18 years of age when I decided to exchange my tranquil life in a large, old manor house at Winford, Somerset, for marriage to the brother of one of my school friends. He was leaving, almost immediately, for India, where he was to take up the post of Assistant Conservator of Forests. I had no idea what this venture would entail, nor did I care. I was in love, and it seemed a grand adventure to get away from my sheltered home and taste the wilds of the Indian jungle.

I sailed from Bombay in March 1911, and after a marvellous wedding at Government House, Lucknow, where my husband's uncle reigned as Lieutenant-Governor, we left for our headquarters in the lovely hill station of Naini Tal, where the placid waters of a small lake are surrounded by seven hills, on the slopes of which are dotted bungalows and residences. Later on, I discovered there were two bazaars—both regrettable eyesores—one at each end of the lake.

I was delighted with the home that my husband had selected—the first of the three we were destined to occupy during the next 30 years. We spent a happy ten days unpacking our wedding presents and settling in "Pope's Villa", as we had christened our residence. Built

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on a ledge on the hillside, the bungalow possessed a tennis court, while the garden was built in terraces up and down the hill. It was the usual type of hill bungalow—badly designed and badly built, but I grew to love it. There were six fair-sized rooms, furnished with the rickety furniture one finds in hill houses, but once supplemented with the articles we had bought ourselves, and those that had been given to us as wedding presents, we were indeed proud of our Indian home. What did it matter that our bath was a tin tub fed by water heated in old kerosene containers on a wood fire; that the kitchen was in an out-house; that we had to cook on charcoal braziers; and that sanitation rose no higher than a thunder-box!

My husband was in charge of the various forests scattered about on the valleys and mountains within a ring of some 40 or 50 miles radius from Naini Tal. This hill station was our home during the greater part of our stay in India, and I was soon to find how lucky we were to have started off in such an attractive division.

The Tal, or lake, called after the Hindu Goddess Narayani (or Naini), was held particularly sacred by the hill men, and for a long time they had done everything in their power to prevent it from being "polluted" by the intrusion of Europeans. It was on the 18th November, 1841, that a Mr. Barron, touring the Kumaon hills in search of a really healthy and scenic spot, was brought hither by a guide, arriving at the lake from the North. This is the first recorded discovery of the Tal by Europeans. During the year following Mr. Barron's visit, the place was examined under official instructions and thereafter developed rapidly.

The lake, about 1,500 yards long by 500 yards broad,

has a maximum depth of 93 feet. The surface of the lake is about 6,400 feet above sea-level. The surrounding seven hills are all over 7,000 feet, the highest, Cheena, being 8,600 feet. Rising steeply from the lake, the hills are well-wooded, chiefly with evergreen oaks, but on the Cheena slopes I discovered there was a fine forest of cypress, a species not found anywhere else within many miles of Naini Tal.

Unfortunately, the hills are composed of very loose rock, and a disastrous landslide occurred in 1880: from the 16th to the 19th September, 33 inches of rain fell, reducing the hillside on the north to liquid mud. A slight earthquake caused the avalanche which killed 151 people. As a result of this catastrophe, an elaborate drainage system was built, thus assuring the future stability of the hillsides.

Cheena commands a marvellous panorama. Looking to the north from the summit, one can see the view of the high snow peaks extending in a wide arc of over 100 miles, from Bandarpunch in the West to unnamed peaks in western Nepal. But always the great Trisul-Nanda Devi massif dominates the landscape. Nanda Devi (25,660 feet), 75 miles distant, is the highest peak in sight. Trisul (23,406 feet) is the nearest of the snow peaks (66 miles). Other famous peaks to be seen from Cheena are Chaukamba, Nilkanta, Kamet and the Kedarnath group.

In the same northward direction, the eye travels over the middle Himalayas, a series of ridges cultivated in terraces on their lower slopes but somewhat barren on their higher parts, and comes to rest on the eternal snows. To the south, the eye encounters the great Gangetic plain, nearby a patchwork of forest and savannah (the

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submontane tract known as the Terai and Bhabar), and beyond, to the horizon, a sea of flat cultivation. Occasionally, at sunset, one may see the glint of the sun on the Ganges itself, 100 miles away.

We had only been in Naini two days when my husband took me up Cheena before breakfast to show me what he said was one of the finest views in the world. Nor did he exaggerate. I sat enthralled, never imagining that there was anything anywhere so magnificent as the snow mountains I was looking upon for the first, but by no means the last, time. Think of it! A view of more than a hundred miles in every direction—one half a sea of flat land, the other a wild tumble of tremendous mountains and valleys compared with which Ben Nevis and Snowdon are but mole-mounds. Always was I entranced by the view from Cheena, especially when I watched the ever-changing clouds, and the play of light and shadow on the hills.

Our all-too-brief honeymoon over, my husband announced that we must go on tour to a distant part of his division. It seemed a pity that we had to leave our nice bungalow so soon, but I had been warned that for at least seven months of every year we should have to live in the great Indian forests, away from home.

Shortly we were "marching" (funny how we used that word even when we rode horses or elephants) to a Forest rest-house at Bhowali, 10 miles from Naini Tal.

Coolies were our only means of transport (each man carrying a 50-pound load), but we had quite an army of them. The procession was headed by my husband and myself, sometimes riding, sometimes walking. Just behind us walked the Forest Ranger, followed by Forest guards, then the grooms, and our retinue of servants—

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cook, bearer (valet), two Government orderlies, table servant, sweeper, washerman, cowman, and two post-runners who brought our mail from Naini Tal. Trailing along the path came the line of coolies carrying a weird assortment of loads. Jugs and basins were put in a tub, and pots, pans and tins which could not be fitted into any box were carried by hand. The rest-houses had a minimum of furniture, so that we had to take along our own crockery, lamps and linen. A special coolie of low caste had to be engaged to carry the camp commode. A flock of sheep and goats brought up the rear, for we had to be our own butchers.

Our road went through hill forest nearly all the way. The rhododendrons were a blaze of red on the hillsides, and the air was heavy with the scent of the beautiful white bauhinia. The branches of many trees were covered with delicate white and pale mauve orchids.

We did not hurry, and halted for a rather lengthy lunch by a mountain stream. Several grey monkeys (*langurs*) played in the trees above us—handsome creatures they were, with long grey hair and coal-black faces. Some of the adult monkeys were about $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height. The babies, fascinating little creatures, played together just like human children.

When we arrived at Bhowali it was tea-time. The servants unpacked what was necessary and prepared a meal.

I had done my first march in India!

Next morning we began another march, this time to the big cantonment of Ranikhet, a beautiful place of pine trees and magnificent views of the snow mountains. My husband got me up at dawn to watch the sunrise on them, and told me the names of the main peaks.

We left next day on the third stage of our journey.

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The sun blazed down, and the sky seemed to deepen in its blueness against the glittering white of the snow mountains.

We had not travelled far when I saw a great herd of sheep and goats coming towards us. They were shepherded by the weirdest-looking men I had ever seen, and walking in front was a huge dog with a shaggy yellow coat, something like a chow only much bigger. I did not like the look of the dog, so I took cover behind my husband.

"Whoever are these people?" I said.

"Tibetans," he told me. "They have crossed some very high passes from their homes in Tibet, and are now on their way back."

Each sheep or goat carried a little salt-filled saddle-bag on its back, and my husband told me that the Tibetans brought their flocks, carrying loads of borax, over tremendous precipices on tiny paths and then over the lower hill bridle-paths to market towns at the foot of the hills. Here they bartered their borax, skins, etc., chiefly for salt, matches and kerosene.

An old man in front had in his hand a wheel on a stick, which he twirled as he went along. He had a jolly face which wrinkled into a smile when we stopped and tried to talk to him. Others of the party clustered around, eyeing us with great interest. There were several women—fair-skinned and rosy-cheeked—and they wore fine necklaces of silver set with turquoises, and huge ear-rings. They were all busy spinning wool with which to make their clothes and very fine blankets. They were inconceivably dirty and smelt atrociously. "They never wash themselves or their clothes," my husband whispered to me. "When one garment wears out, they pop a new one over it!"

I shuddered.

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"Why does the old man twirl that wheel?" I asked, presently.

My husband laughed. "It's his way of praying. You see, inside that wheel is a scroll of paper on which are written prayers which go up to Heaven as the wheel goes round."

We knew no Tibetan, and the Tibetans knew no English or Hindustani. Conversation, therefore, was impossible. However, I dearly wanted that prayer-wheel as a curio. I told my husband of my wish and he began to make gesticulations and produce several rupees. The old man, when he finally understood, was reluctant to part with his treasure, but 10 rupees and a tin of cigarettes at last clinched the bargain. Before surrendering it, he held it up to his forehead and said a prayer. Afterwards I wished we had not tempted him to part with it and hoped it would not bring us bad luck.

We spent that night at Siuni in a ghostly old house—the one-time home of the manager of a brewery now in ruins. The house was said to be haunted by an Indian woman who had been murdered there.

We had just begun our dinner when we heard a most frightful commotion in the direction of the pantry. If this were a ghost, it was certainly a violent one. Bangs and thumps were followed by the noise of falling crockery and glass. On entering the room we saw a large wild cat careering around with an enamel pail jammed firmly on its head, which it was shaking from side to side in a frantic effort to free itself. One of the servants soon coped with the situation, but nevertheless I was glad to get out of that house.

I was very anxious to try my hand with a rifle. A Forest officer has to be out most of the day inspecting the forests, and I knew I should be left alone for many hours.

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I was not keen on knitting and embroidery work, and there would be few books to read. *Shikar* would thus afford a welcome relief from the monotony. My husband, Evelyn, agreed that it would.

We marched several days through the pine forests. In the evenings Evelyn made a target for me which he fixed on a tree, and I had some good practice. He promised to take me out shooting at Bhatronj. Here, he said, we would find *gural* (mountain goats) on the steep precipices.

In those days game was plentiful in the hills, but the recent provision of gun licences to all and sundry has caused a great reduction in the number of wild animals to be found. There was an occasional tiger, numerous leopards, bear, *sambar* (large deer), *serow* (large goat antelope) and barking deer for the rifle; and some jungle-fowl, several species of pheasant and partridge, and excellent *chikor* (hill partridge) for the shotgun.

Owing to the lack of food, very few tigers live in the hills, but sometimes old and decrepit specimens wander up, driven away from better hunting grounds by younger ones. They often become man-eaters. My husband said there was a man-eater about in the hills round Naini Tal and he might try for him if he had the opportunity.

We were fortunate to have with us an orderly called Jankru Singh. He was a first-class hunter, keen, and with a wonderful eye for game. Sometimes he would spot an animal 200 or 300 yards away which I simply could not see until it moved. Once he pointed out a *gural*, with horns 7 to 9 inches long, whose ears were just visible over a rock 200 yards away.

I was eager to reach Bhatronj and very excited the morning we set out at dawn for some big precipices not far from the bungalow where, Jankru Singh told us, *gural*

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were always to be found. In order to reach the precipices we had to climb a steep hill behind the house through a dense forest of Himalayan oaks. Nearing the top we moved with the utmost caution: on the other side of the mountain the ground fell away in steep grassy slopes descending to the valley 3,000 feet below. These slopes were to be our hunting ground.

We had only proceeded a short distance before Jankru Singh came to a sudden halt and crouched down. As previously instructed, we followed suit. It is fatal to point when on a stalking expedition. All one can do is to say "Do you see that large rock or tree? Well 3 o'clock from there." Usually there are a dozen rocks or many trees, and one's eyes roam about wildly trying to spot the game. Away across a deep ravine were three female *gural* and one male with a passable head. "Look, look!" urged my husband. But look as I might I could not see them, so perfectly did they merge into the background.

After five minutes, by which time Jankru Singh was nearly frantic with impatience, I suddenly spotted them. I had a .256 Mannlicher, a wonderful little rifle, but I was so excited I could not hold the rifle steady, and when finally I pulled the trigger—my first shot at "big" game—I missed the *gural* by yards. They were off like a flash, bounding up the ravine and away over the ridge out of sight.

My husband was quite comforting. "Never mind," he said, "we're sure to find some more."

So we went on down the steep and slippery grassy slopes. As a rule I dislike heights, but I was now too thrilled to notice or care. Soon Jankru Singh spotted another little family of *gural*. On all fours we stalked them with the greatest of care from behind a ridge,

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peering over the edge occasionally. At 200 yards I lay flat and took my second shot at a *gural*. Again I missed. Again, like a flash, the *gural* were out of sight on the other side of the ridge.

We decided to have one more try, and began to descend the slopes still further. By this time, the sun was high in the sky and we were uncomfortably hot and thirsty.

We had to scramble along the precipice some distance before Jankru Singh saw another small herd with two males. "We might," he said, "be able to approach within 100 yards if we were very careful, made not the slightest noise, and kept hidden behind the ridge."

When we judged this distance had been reached, I crawled along, inch by inch, to a spot from whence I could see the *gural* quite easily.

Slowly I got one of the males within my sights. I waited until my heart thumped less violently and then pulled the trigger. The *gural*, shot through the heart, leapt in the air and crashed down 200 feet into the ravine below. Jankru Singh beamed with delight, and before I could speak he was away down the precipice to retrieve the prize. My husband gripped my arm. "Well done, little woman," he said.

It was at this moment that I began to look around. To my horror I realised I was on the face of a steep grassy precipice which fell 2,000 feet to the river below. Looking up, I saw that we had descended 1,000 feet at least—and somehow I had to get back.

I felt sick with fright, and my knees began to wobble. But the ascent had to be made. Helped by my husband and Jankru Singh, and clinging desperately to tufts of grass, I gradually climbed upwards, but at times Jankru Singh had to cup his hands as a foothold for me, while

Evelyn gave me a pull from above. The grass was so slippery that I took off my shoes, which had not been properly nailed for climbing.

I realised that Jankru Singh, who was a hill-man, could not see what all the fuss was about, and I fear I must have fallen sadly in his esteem. But for the moment I did not care. In one place we had to negotiate a track a few inches wide, with a big drop below. I was creeping along, leaning in towards the hill (the worst thing to do), feeling utterly miserable, and trying to clutch handfuls of grass, when Jankru Singh said to my husband, "Why is the Memsahib afraid? *This is a road!*"

When we reached the top, I was thoroughly exhausted; however, the thought of my first "bag" gradually revived me.

Evelyn's work next took us to Almora. To get there we had to retrace our steps to Ranikhet, and cross the hills. Almora, a small and rather squalid town on a ridge, was the headquarters of the 3rd Gurkha Rifles. It boasts a prison, a leper asylum, and a consumptive sanatorium—the redeeming feature being a marvellous view of the snow mountains.

On our way to Almora we passed through many villages. The inhabitants crowded round us, stared at me, and sometimes fingered my clothes. The district is called Kumaon, and the inhabitants Kumaonis. The houses are built of stone, have slate roofs, and are complete with wooden doors and window frames, often ornamented with carving. The hill-side villages are perched on terraces which have been constructed with infinite labour, and from their tiny fields the villagers reap but a scanty harvest even in the best of years. The most fertile parts of the country are the hot alluvial valley bottoms, where the fields can be irrigated. The main

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crops are wheat, millet, rice, mustard, potatoes, with an occasional banana tree.

The Kumaonis are of poor physique, and are seldom recruited for the army. With an ever-increasing population, food is scarce, and the young men of Kumaon are obliged to leave their homes and find work as coolies in the forests, on the roads, or as orderlies and clerks in Government service. In winter the villages are deserted except for one or two men, the remainder having migrated to the foot of the hills with their families and their cattle. Here they live in grass huts, while the cattle graze on the grassy savannahs of the plains. They return to the hills at the beginning of the hot weather in early April.

Much of the country we passed through had, been denuded of forest and we passed men carrying loads of grass and fuel for which they had had to make a three-days' journey. My husband spoke about soil erosion, and what terrible floods were caused in the rivers as a result. "Part of my work is to make plantations to try and remedy this," he explained.

We saw several lepers. They were a terrible sight. Outcast from the villages, they lived their ghastly existence begging by the roadside, holding up their poor maimed hands, often without fingers. Sometimes their faces were eaten away. Comparatively few of them can be accommodated in the asylums.

Our way back to Naini Tal led us through a small hamlet called Ratighat. Here was a crowd of people standing outside the rest-house, which we reached in the late afternoon, tired and longing for a cup of tea. The people seemed very excited, and we wondered what it was all about. They rushed towards us, all talking at once. One young man had tears running down his cheeks,

and several women were wailing loudly. It was some time before my husband could discover what was amiss.

It transpired that the young man's wife had been killed by a tiger the previous day. He said she had gone out to cut grass with several other women. They had gone into the forest, singing and chattering as they went. They each had a small sickle, and when they reached a place where the grass grew tall and thick, they set about cutting as much as they could carry home. They worked for several hours and then, weary, they had sat down by a stream to drink and eat some parched corn. They had just been making ready to return with their loads of grass when some monkeys in the trees gave warning of the danger. As they turned, they had seen the tiger crouching behind a bush ready to spring. The next moment one of the young women was being mauled to death by a tiger. The others had fled back, yelling, to the village. The wretched husband had rushed blindly up the path. But it was too late. Darkness had descended, and the bereaved husband had had to return to the village.

The next morning a party of about twenty men had set out, carrying tom-toms and tin cans with which to frighten off the tiger. They found the place of the tragedy marked by a large pool of blood and some rags of clothes. They had started to follow a blood trail which they saw on the grass and fallen leaves, shouting and beating their tin cans, but they had not gone far when an ominous growl close by had made them fear to go on further. It was agonising for the poor young husband, but there was nothing they could do, and the party returned to the village. Then they had heard that the Forest officer would be arriving at the rest-house in the afternoon, and they had decided to ask for his help.

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It was too late to do anything that night, but plans were made for the next day. The Headman of the village said he would collect about fifty men from his own and a neighbouring village a few miles away. Evelyn told them to bring all the tin cans and tom-toms they could find, and he would meet them with his forest staff in the village early next morning.

I was so excited that night that I slept very little. It was such a short time ago that I had been in peaceful Somerset. And now, on the morrow, I was to help in the hunt for tiger!

We were up early, but a large crowd had already assembled in the village. Soon the march for the forest had begun. The man-eating tiger hunt was on.

My husband said he must see the place and surroundings of the tragedy before he could decide what best should be done, so the Headman guided us to the top of a deep, densely-forested ravine, about 100 yards broad and with precipitous sides about 60 feet high. On either side of the ravine were terraced fields. It was in the ravine that the woman had been killed and my husband suspected that the tiger would still be there. "It is obvious," he told me, "that the man-eater would move up or down the ravine, because the sides are steep and lead only to the fields where there is no cover."

He quickly came to a decision. Jankru Singh and the Forest guards would stay with the mass of villagers at the top of the ravine, while he and I went to the bottom of it. We each had a rifle, and our guns we handed to Jankru Singh and the Ranger. Jankru Singh and his army of villagers would wait until we had reached our places—in a matter of 15 minutes—then they would make a line across the ravine and move down it, *en masse*, yelling and

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beating the tom-toms and tin-cans as hard as they could. My husband impressed upon them the necessity to keep in close formation, shoulder to shoulder. The tiger, he hoped, hearing the row and seeing so many men, would come slowly down the ravine to where we would be waiting with our rifles at the ready.

Sure that Jankru Singh understood he had to give us time to reach our places at the foot of the ravine before he started to move down the villagers, we left him and found ourselves a good spot from where we could look into and across the ravine. Here we sat back to back on the ground, so that the tiger could not take us by surprise. I was thrilled yet terrified, but the lack of confidence I had in myself was more than compensated by my utter and complete faith in my husband.

We waited half an hour before the sound of shouts and the banging of the tin cans came to our ears. We tensed, expecting to catch a glimpse of the tiger at any moment. I tried to look all ways at once. My heart nearly stopped when I heard a scuffling, and automatically I loosed the safety-catch of my rifle, ready for anything, but certain it was the tiger. When half a dozen pheasants rose with a whirr, my heart nearly burst.

The shouting became louder and the rattle of tins rose in crescendo. "Now they have seen the tiger," I thought, and I could hardly breathe.

Then the noise stopped and we saw some of the men coming towards us. It was Jankru Singh who told us that the villagers, failing to make a complete line across the ravine because of their fear (and who can blame them?), had allowed the tiger to escape through a gap and get clear of the ravine.

We returned to camp, crestfallen at the failure of the

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shoot, but hoping we might soon get another opportunity to free the country of this dangerous pest.

Meanwhile, the miserable husband gathered together the few remaining bones of his wife, wrapped them up and took them away so that he could carry out the funeral rites on a funeral pyre by a river.

CHAPTER TWO

Naini Tal

I HAD enjoyed my first experience of camp life, but I was eager to return to Naini Tal. In camp I realised I should have to rough it; that there would be much to discourage and depress me unless I adapted myself to the new life that stretched out before me. And, indeed, many months elapsed before I became accustomed to the primitive way of living, learnt how to organise the menage, to know what to take and what to leave behind when we were on the march, how to prevent the cook wrapping the cold meat in a filthy duster, or putting the bag of flour in the same box along with the kerosene oil.

In time, however, a routine emerged. Everything had its appointed place, and we achieved that comfort so necessary to the particular life we were destined to live.

I grew to love Naini Tal with its gaieties and amusements, the excitements of yacht racing, the joy of good tennis, and the jolly dances and picnics in which we partook. But best of all I loved our bungalow, our first home. Always that pang of sadness stabbed at my heart each time my husband broke the news that we must prepare for the next "tour". This meant leaving all our treasured possessions packed away in tin-lined boxes, and confining our luggage to the barest of necessities. But always there was the thought—"We shall be coming back. . . ."

Naini Tal, unlike many other hill stations, included yacht racing amongst its attractions. The N.T.Y.C. was

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probably the only yacht club in the world to have races every day for six months out of the year—and at over 6,000 feet altitude! In those days there were nine yachts, cutters of about 16 feet length, built on the Thames in 1910–1911. They proved themselves wonderful little boats, and lasted many years, giving unlimited pleasure and recreation to the yachting fraternity who yearly visited Naini Tal. Whether the Yacht Club is still functioning I do not know, but I believe it is.

It was an extremely windy day when I took my first trip in a yacht. I was terrified and demanded to be taken in at once! After that, I used to go as crew to various skippers and learned the art of sailing from them. Occasionally they would let me steer.

In my first race as skipper I was so excited that, when rounding a buoy near the boat-house, I let go my mainsheet altogether and, as I had forgotten to knot the end, it ran out of the blocks. The result was I had no control over the main-sail, which flapped about in an alarming manner. The officer of the day yelled instructions through a megaphone, but I had to retire from the race, having fouled three yachts, whose infuriated skippers were heaping abuse on my head in no uncertain language. I would gladly have sunk with my yacht.

Although I had great fun yachting, my adventures did not always have happy endings. I particularly remember one occasion when an old friend came to see us. He knew quite a lot about sailing, so we chartered a yacht and entered for a race. It was a Sunday, and a stormy Sunday at that. We started off well, with the wind behind us. At the east end of the lake we had to round a buoy. We did not know much about the rules, but we managed to turn quite well, except for hitting two yachts,

one on either side of us, rather violently. The skippers were extremely rude to us, but I was far too excited and busy hauling on the sheets to worry about that. We had only gone a little way from the buoy when there was a terrific squall, and suddenly I found myself struggling in the water. I was wearing a thick tweed skirt, which clung round my legs and felt as heavy as a ton of bricks. Fortunately for me, I fell on, and not under, the main-sail, which prevented me from sinking. I am not a good swimmer and was really very frightened.

I struggled over the sail, and my friend, who was sitting on the yacht, now lying on her side, leaned over to give me a hand up. It is not easy to climb from the water on to a capsized boat, and I thought I should never manage it. My friend, however, gave me a heave, and in so doing somehow put out his shoulder. He was in great pain, although I did not know that at the time. It seemed that we sat on the yacht for a long time, and then to our consternation we realised that she was slowly sinking. My friend could not swim because of his injured shoulder, and I knew I could only keep afloat for a matter of a few minutes.

When only a few inches of the yacht remained above the surface we slid off into the water, and held on, praying someone would see us and come to our aid. And so it was. Another yacht was already sailing towards us. It was now blowing really hard, so the skipper proceeded to take down his sails before he came alongside and took us off. He was only just in time, too, for soon after our boat disappeared altogether,

My teeth were chattering with cold and fright by the time I reached the boat-house. Sidney insisted on giving me a whisky macdonald, which sent a glow of warmth

through my veins. I decided to have another, not because I liked it (I thought it was horrible) but to prevent me from contracting pneumonia. I began to feel extremely dizzy, and wondered how I was going to get up and walk out of the club. I waited an hour before I risked it. I did not catch even a cold, and Sidney got an extra ten days leave on account of his shoulder, so did not do so badly after all.

We had a gay time that year in Naini. Besides the yachting there were many dances, tennis parties and picnics, and occasionally we ventured on a dinner party. We could not afford a good cook—we paid ours only 12 rupees. (about 18 shillings) a month, which sum, of course, failed to attract a really experienced "chef".

We invited eight guests to our first dinner party, and great were the consultations cook and I had about the menu. Finally we decided on a hors-d'œuvre of anchovies, clear soup, roast sirloin, chocolate sponge, and a tin of asparagus.

The anchovies were quite good, and the table servants (we had hired a second man for the evening) cleared the plates. Shortly afterwards a loud crash came from the direction of the pantry, which opened off the dining-room. There was a long pause, during which I became very uncomfortable, but the guests talked on valiantly. There seemed to be a great commotion going on in the pantry, but at last the soup was handed round. Afterwards I discovered that the cook had dropped the saucepan of soup and spilled most of it on the floor. He had then mopped up as much as he could off the dirty matting, added some warm water, and passed it round. My plate had a piece of coir matting in it, and Evelyn's had two long hairs. It tasted awful, and was nearly cold. I was

too embarrassed to say anything, so we all drank, or pretended to drink, this awful mess. What the guests thought I dared not imagine, but I had to admire them for their politeness.

One day my husband came into the bungalow looking very excited. It appeared that a Forest guard had brought in a girl, about eleven years old, who had been found in a not very distant forest where she had been actually brought up by a bear—a sort of female Mowgli, who had lived as an animal all her life! The bear had been killed by the villagers, who had seen this strange being wandering about nearby. They had promptly captured it and found to their astonishment that it was a human being, a girl. She walked on all fours and grunted like a bear. She was very savage, too, snapping and snarling at anyone who came near her. "She's been taken to the hospital, where she'll be fed on fruits and roots and carefully looked after," Evelyn told me. "I doubt if it will do any good, though."

He was right. We often went to see her, and tried to make friends, but it was no use. She never became any tamer, and after a few months she pined away and died. This was the only authentic case of a jungle child I ever heard of in all my years in India.

In the hot weather, from April to the arrival of the rains, in July, a Forest officer's chief anxiety is the likelihood of fire. The forests are tinder-dry, and the merest spark will set off a blaze which can rapidly flare up out of control and destroy thousands of acres of forest. All possible precautions are taken, of course, such as the cutting of wide fire-lines to isolate outbreaks by counter-firing from them. Fire watchers are also employed, who patrol the forests and, in case of fire, raise the alarm

immediately and round up the local villagers to help fight the flames.

News of a fire came in one evening just as we had returned from a picnic. The outbreak was about 25 miles east of Naini Tal. I had never seen a forest fire, so I begged my husband to take me with him.

We set off immediately, travelling all night with a great glare in the sky, and arrived on the scene of the conflagration early next morning. We had a hasty meal of sandwiches, and then my husband dashed off to superintend the operations which the local Ranger had started to deal with the fire. I followed him as quickly as I could.

The fire was in a valley, and the flames were tearing up the hills on all sides. Some villagers, misled by agitators to believe that by destroying Government forests they were harming the Government, had started the fires, and were busy starting fresh ones when we arrived. Evelyn sent off a Ranger to arrest them if he could, while he and all the staff he could muster fought the holocaust. The country was an inferno of fire and smoke, and flames raced up 2,000 feet in 10 minutes, burning everything in their path. Once a bear dashed past, its back hair all singed, and a *serow* (a large wild goat) was also fleeing before the flames. Nothing could escape, however. Birds and animals were burned alive, and we heard later that several villagers had lost their lives, also a *saddhu* (priest), who had been asleep in the forest when the outbreak commenced.

My husband started a counter-fire, which had gone about a furlong when another fire, caused by the villagers in the valley below and behind, came roaring up the hill. The crowns of the pine trees were bursting into flame from the hot blast even before the fire reached them.

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We threw ourselves face downwards on the hot ashes of the small patch which had just burnt out, and buried our heads in our coats. As the fire rushed by, the heat was so terrific that it scorched our lungs. Had it not been for this patch of burned grass, there would have been no hope for our small party. It was the most terrifying experience I had ever had. In the evening rain came to the rescue and the fire petered out during the night—but only after 29,000 acres of forest had been destroyed.

Soon after this episode the rains broke; the hills were covered with clouds, and everything became very damp. We had to be careful of our clothes, for if we failed to air them every few days before log fires, they became mildewed, and our boots grew fungi. Sometimes it rained heavily for several days without stopping, and the water rushed in a raging torrent down the water channels built in the hill-sides. In a heavy storm the noise on our tin-sheet roof was deafening. I remember a storm which gave 26 inches of rain in two days (equal to a year of rain in London), and another which gave 18 inches in 24 hours. One cloud-burst gave 5 inches in one hour!

From time to time news came in about the man-eating tiger, which continued to kill a human being every week or so. The reports all came in to my husband, and the total victims to date had mounted to nearly 40. The Government offered a reward of 500 rupees for the destruction of the pest.

It was on a day of torrential rain that a report came in that a woman had been killed by the tiger at Kilberry, about 5 miles from Naini Tal. Evelyn and I decided that this was our opportunity, and without any loss of time we packed some cold meat and bread, butter and tea, took a kettle and a lantern, and set out in the pouring

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rain for Kilberry. Unknown to us, Mr. Wright, who owned a hotel in Naini and was a keen sportsman, had also heard the news, and when we arrived at Kilberry we found that he had forestalled us. This gave him the right of first shot at the tiger.

We all went together to the village, where the relatives of the woman were wailing piteously, and soon collected a party of men who were willing to guide us to the spot where the mauling had taken place.

This time, however, there was no sign of the corpse, the tiger apparently having taken the body of its victim away.

We looked at each other, wondering what to do next. Somehow we must find the corpse; but this was not going to be easy or safe. The grass where the attack had taken place was trampled flat and dyed red with blood. We looked around, trying to trace the direction the tiger had taken with his gruesome load. There was some dense jungle about 200 yards to the west. We searched the ground for marks, and presently found some spots of blood in the direction of the trees. After a while the sound of crows scolding and chattering came to our ears, and my husband said it was almost certain that they were looking at the tiger on the ground beneath them.

About 20 villagers had assembled, armed with axes and knives; a few of them had tom-toms. My husband, Mr. Wright, Jankru Singh, and a Ranger who had turned up walked in front. The villagers followed close behind. I was not allowed to accompany them. Instead, I was to take cover in a stout oak tree, where I sat with my rifle. I was soaked to the skin in spite of my mackintosh, and I could not help feeling worried about the others.

The party could not have travelled far when suddenly

I heard nerve-shattering roars. My heart beat so quickly, I nearly suffocated. The villagers yelled at the top of their voices and beat their tom-toms wildly.

The corpse, I was told, was found under the tree where the crows had been sitting, the lower limbs already eaten. The tiger must have moved off unseen.

Mr. Wright was undaunted. It was almost certain, he said, that the tiger would come back to finish his meal in the night, when we had gone. He said he intended to sit up in a *machan* (seat tied in a tree) and wait for him. One of the villagers lent him a blanket, also a lantern, which he lit and placed by the body. My husband would have given anything for the chance, but the hotel proprietor had been first in the field.

We heard what happened later.

The tiger did not come back that evening nor all that night, but was heard roaring with disappointment and rage within a furlong. Next morning he was still very much there, but the villagers were too frightened to rescue Mr. Wright, who also was too frightened to scramble down from the *machan* alone. All that day and half the next night this situation continued.

The rain had stopped, but Mr. Wright was wet through and chilled to the bone. He was also starving. The lantern had gone out long ago, and it was pitch-dark. Mr. Wright told us afterwards that he could hear the tiger growling, and the fact that it had not come back to its kill proved that it had seen him in the tree. About midnight the tiger rushed under the tree, seized the body, and was off again without being seen.

Mr. Wright returned to Naini Tal next morning after his vigil of 36 exciting but unhappy hours. And the man-eater was still at large.

CHAPTER THREE

Camping in the Hills

IN October we had to close down Pope's Villa for another "tour". The rains were over, and every day was brilliantly fine with not a cloud in the sky. The nights were cold, however, with sometimes a hard frost.

My husband had urgent work on hand at Bhowali, where a turpentine and resin distillery was being erected. The resin from the chir pine forests round Naini Tal, Ranikhet and Almora were needed for the distillery.

The method used for collecting resin is quite simple. Blazes are made on the trees, under which small earthenware pots are hung. Gangs of coolies fresh the cuts on the blazes every week, and at the same time empty the contents of the resin pots into empty kerosene oil tins. This industry is a great boon to the inhabitants of Kumaon. Besides erecting the distillery, my husband had to invent a new method of distillation suitable for the resin obtained from the chir pine. After many experiments and failures he eventually solved the problem, and the Bhowali distillery was able to produce first-class turpentine and resin in large quantities.

There were many accidents at the sawmill before the men grew more experienced in their work. One man lost the top of a finger whilst operating the circular saw. He said to my husband, "I only did this," and in demonstrating what had happened, off came the top of another finger!

The industry developed rapidly and eventually it became a large and very profitable business concern.

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While my husband worked, I set my heart on shooting a leopard. To do this in the hills one must either find some animal which has been killed by a leopard, or sit up over a calling goat in the hope that a leopard will hear the cries and venture forth for a meal. We seldom heard of kills in the hills, however, so I had to resort to the goat.

Leopards were fairly numerous around Bhowali, so while my husband was busy at the distillery, I set off to a likely spot in the forest with Jankru Singh, who led the goat, while another orderly carried my *machan* and rope-ladder. Having chosen a suitable place, Jankru Singh, with the help of the orderly, fixed my *machan* in a tree about 15 feet above the ground. I then climbed the rope-ladder into the *machan* and camouflaged myself with leaves and twigs.

The goat, which had been kept out of sight so that it could not watch me climb into the tree, was then brought up and tied to a shrub in front of me and clearly within my vision. The orderly and Jankru Singh then walked away, calling to the goat as they went. The wretched animal, thinking itself abandoned, made frantic efforts to follow, tried to break the rope, leapt up and down, all the time uttering loud cries. Once the goat realised that it was not alone, it would immediately stop calling, and to remain longer would be futile. Accordingly I had to sit motionless.

Time after time I sat for an hour or two vainly waiting for a leopard to appear. But I always found it interesting. There were always birds to watch, and sometimes a troupe of great *langurs* would swing about in nearby trees. I have sat so still that birds have perched within a yard of me.

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And then at long last my dream came true. One evening, soon after I had settled in my *machan*, and my companions had left me, there was a rush and a scuffle, and a leopard was on the bleating goat.

I was so excited that I banged off my rifle, with the inevitable result. The leopard vanished absolutely unscathed. The poor goat was dead, of course, and I was almost in tears. To think I had waited so long, and then when opportunity came I had acted like an excited schoolgirl.

The next time a leopard turned up, I had not the good luck to bag it, but I did fire before it reached its victim, thus saving the goat's life.

Jankru Singh told me that a leopard often visited the village in the evening, and took off a pariah dog. The Forest house was not far from the village, so I tried sitting over a goat in the garden, but nothing happened. Once, in the dusk, I saw a leopard stalking my dog as I was returning to the house from the village. I decided therefore to try my luck with a dog, and I told Jankru Singh to get one for me. I did not much like the idea, but I argued that the pariah dog would probably be killed and eaten in any case, and if I could shoot the marauder over its dead body, then it would not have died in vain.

Just before sunset I tied the dog about 10 yards away from our bedroom window. I waited inside with a gun loaded with lethal bullets. There was a clear grassy space for about 50 yards behind the dog, and beyond that, thick jungle. The servants' quarters were away on the other side of the house, so it was quiet and undisturbed.

I had not long to wait before I saw a leopard creeping cautiously, flat on its stomach, towards the dog. The dog also saw it and the hair down its back stood upright.

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The sight of the dog's obvious terror upset me so much that I was quite relieved to see the leopard turn suddenly and retreat to the thick cover of the trees. He had been disturbed by the sound of footsteps approaching the house, and a few minutes later my husband came in. I explained to him what had happened, and asked him to take the gun, for his aim was steadier than mine.

A few minutes later we saw the leopard slinking out of cover again and crawling slowly towards the dog. Suddenly it sprang forward, and with a great bound was on top of the dog. My husband fired as quickly as he could, but his luck was no better than mine. The dog lay dead, but of the leopard there was no sign whatever.

I decided that this was the end of our effort to shoot this leopard, but Jankru Singh assured me that the animal would return some time during the night to retrieve the body of the dog. "I will wait by the window and watch while sahib and memsahib have dinner!" he offered.

We had only just started our meal, when Jankru Singh appeared at the door beckoning us. We both crept as quietly as we could into the next room, and up to the window. There, outside, in the darkness, was the leopard standing over his victim.

My husband fired. There was a blinding flash and a terrible bang, but when we peered out of the window there was no sign of the leopard at all. Still Jankru Singh proclaimed that it would come back again, and he volunteered to sit by the window until we went to bed. It was pitch-dark outside by this time, so Jankru Singh put a lantern by the body of the dog and shaded the light away from the window with a hat. Then he took up his position inside again.

We had just finished our interrupted meal when we

were surprised to see Jankru Singh appear at the door beckoning excitedly. We tiptoed once more to the window in the next room, and in the light of the lantern saw that the leopard had indeed returned again. This time my husband could see him quite well. Taking careful aim, he fired, and the leopard fell shot through the heart. He was not a large animal, and was pitifully thin—a fact which accounted for his persistence in returning a third time for a tasty meal.

I could not yet claim that I had shot a leopard, but I had been on the scene when my husband had done so. And, after all, that was the next best thing.

From Bhowali, we went into the hills to the north. My husband had been asked to visit and advise about the forest on a tea estate. There were many tea plantations in the Kumaon hills in those days. Some of them were seventy miles from the nearest railhead. No wonder the cost of export gradually brought ruin to the planters.

Some of the owners of these tea estates in the hills were particularly odd—especially those who had dwelt there a number of years. They may have been affected by the solitude of their lives, or by the altitude at which they lived. One of these men lived entirely alone for many years until, finally, he lost his reason altogether. The postman from the nearest village had instructions to leave all letters and parcels near a certain tree a good distance from the house. The planter would fetch them himself. If anybody approached his dwelling, the old man threatened them with a gun! One day the postman reported that the man's letters and parcels had not been collected from the tree for several days. A local petty official went to investigate, and found the planter dead. His house was in an indescribable state of dirt and neglect.

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The estate we were to visit was at Kausani, where two delightful old men, brothers, lived and ran the tea garden together. They gave us a great welcome, and a typical planter's meal at 11 o'clock—porridge, eggs and bacon, a huge curry, grilled chops, bread and butter and marmalade and fruit.

From the verandah of the bungalow we had a glorious view of the snow mountains. Trisul (23,406 feet), 35 miles away, looked magnificent.

We learnt that the brothers had lived at Kausani since 1860, and before starting their tea estate had had to clear the forest area. At that time many bears roamed in the forests round the estate—they had shot 67 in one year, they told us.

When I mentioned that I would like to go out on a bear hunt, they were quite helpful and suggested that I accompanied their Headman and Jankru Singh to a part of the forest where a bear—the big black Himalayan species—had been seen recently.

It appeared that the bears frequented the oak forests in the autumn, feeding on the acorns. In winter they wandered into the deserted villages to hunt for grain: indeed they have been known to climb to the roof of a house, lift up the slates and drop inside, if they scented anything worth eating within.

Their coats are very fine—a sharp contrast to those of their mangy cousins, the sloth bears of the plains—and they are quite savage brutes, attacking without provocation. "The reason for this," one of the brothers explained, "is that their sense of sight and hearing is less acute than those of the tiger or leopard, and thus they are less adept at avoiding human beings. Accordingly, when startled, they attack out of fright, and in self-defence!"

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Next morning we rose at 4 a.m., hoping to surprise the bears at their acorn breakfast. They usually sleep in the day-time.

I was impatient to be off, and as my husband was not quite ready I started off with Jankru Singh carrying my rifle.

It was very cold, and as yet scarcely light. We had gone about a quarter of a mile when suddenly we saw a bear at the top of a tall oak tree. The bear saw us at the same moment. I seized my rifle from Jankru Singh, but before I could raise it to my shoulder, the bear hurled itself in one jump from the tree to the ground, at least 50 feet below. I expected it to charge us, but greatly to my relief it made off in the thick bushy undergrowth. We did not see another bear the whole of that day.

Illness in camp was something I always dreaded. We invariably carried with us a book on medicine and first aid, also a large medicine chest. I read the medical book several times from cover to cover, and during the years ahead successfully treated thousands of cases from the information it gave. Imagine my feelings when, some considerable time later, a leading Calcutta specialist described the book as "a mass of misinformation!"

I often wished I had undertaken some form of medical training myself, for hardly a day passed on tour without some poor villager requiring treatment. Sometimes I could help, if it were a poisoned hand or foot, or if it were malaria or some simple stomach trouble, but I was hopeless when called upon to treat cataract or goitre. I hated having to send anyone away because I could not help them. Some who came to me, however, received a tot of brandy. The faith they had in this stimulant was truly amazing.

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Sometimes men were brought in who had been terribly bitten by a tiger or bear. One man, I remember, had been mauled by a tiger. We cleansed his wounds with iodine, and sent him off to the nearest small town that possessed a doctor, but we heard later, alas, that he died.

Once, whilst we were camping near a big cattle-station, over a hundred people came to consult me in one day. They were afflicted with all manner of diseases. Many of the children had contracted a common eye disease for which, fortunately, I had a good ointment. Several were suffering from a skin disease caused by dirt for which I also had a cure. I could do nothing for the majority of patients, however, so I gave them aspirin or bicarbonate of soda. To one man who said he had a devil in his stomach I gave half a bottle of vermouth. He thought it was brandy, and was vastly pleased.

The end of the year was drawing near, and great was my delight when we received an invitation to a Christmas shoot in the forests at the foot of the hills. We had a long march from Naini Tal, covering 17 miles in the day, and descending 6,000 feet, but I thought it well worth while. At the bottom of the hill we were met by an elephant, and I had my first ride on one of these mammoth creatures.

These Christmas shoots—now, unfortunately, a thing of the past—were very jolly. Our party consisted of ten, and we spent the days wandering through the jungle or roaming the grassy plains, shooting at whatever game we saw. In the forests we hoped to find *sambar* (large deer), while in the grass our prey was swamp deer, partridges and peafowl. At midday we climbed from the elephants to enjoy a sumptuous lunch which had been carried by a

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special elephant under the care of two table servants.

One day we passed some wild plum bushes where a party of five bears were having a feast. Three of these we shot, but a fourth bear, wounded and mad with rage, attacked Kathleen, the elephant upon which my husband and I were riding. Kathleen cared little for tigers, and had never been known to fear anything. The mad, charging bear, however, was too much for her. She fled.

It is a terrifying experience to be on the back of a stampeding elephant. I clung to my husband, who in turn clung to the *mahawat*, who was beating Kathleen on the head with his iron prong as hard as he could. Finally he managed to stop her, much to our relief, before she reached some thick jungle. Had the elephant plunged into it, we should soon have been swept from her back by the tangle of tree branches overhead.

In the evenings, seated round a huge bonfire of logs and branches of trees, we had sing-songs or told *shikar* stories.

The shoot was over all too soon, and my husband had to return to his division for work. The march up the 6,000 feet was tiring and tedious, and snow covered the ground when we reached Naini Tal.

During the next few months we camped around the division. I often went shooting with Jankru Singh, and my proficiency with a rifle improved tremendously. I bagged several *gural* and small barking deer. I tried shooting with a gun, but this proved much more difficult to handle than a rifle.

April found us in Almora with friends. We had just settled in when my husband received an urgent summons from his Conservator (Mr. B. B. Osmaston) to go to

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Bhowali immediately. Some urgent work had cropped up. It was while he was away that he wrote me the glad news that he had, at last, killed the man-eating tiger. But it was not until he returned that he told me the feat had nearly cost him his life. "But I'm still alive," he added, "and I've already sent in my application for the 500 rupees reward to the civil authorities."

This was his story. Some villagers had found the partly-eaten body of an unfortunate shopkeeper between steep banks covered with dense, almost impenetrable undergrowth, and they had kept watch. The corpse was a gruesome sight, naked, with both arms and both legs eaten, but the head and trunk still intact, seamed with gigantic claw marks and the face flattened by a terrific blow. There was one possible tree for a *machan*, sticking up from the bottom of the ravine, almost parallel with the steep bank, so that the *machan* 20 feet up the tree was a bare 10 feet from the top of the bank, and on the same level.

Mr. Osmaston fixed Evelyn in the *machan* with a blanket (he was prepared to sit up all night), then he placed a hurricane oil lantern near the body, and went off to try and get a daylight shot where he thought the tiger might be lying up. The sun went down, leaving the world to darkness and silence. A night breeze flowed down the ravine, and in the flickering lantern light that ghoulisb body appeared to quiver and writhe in agony, a gruesome sight beyond all expression, with all else in pitchy blackness.

An hour that seemed an æon passed, and then Evelyn distinctly heard the tiger coming along the bank behind him. Nearer and nearer, until he was at the edge of the bank overlooking the ravine, and literally 10 feet from

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him on the same level. And here he stopped and sniffed, and sniffed again and again!

The man-eater 10 feet away and completely invisible in the blackness was sniffing my poor husband! Evelyn says he now knows what it must mean to die of fright, as he nearly did so then. His heart was fortunately stout or it would have burst; instead it shook the tree he sat in. For a minute or an hour the tiger stayed there sniffing, and then slithered down the bank to the foot of Evelyn's tree, much to the latter's relief. The tiger began to snarl and growl at the lamp, and then followed a period of absolute silence. Suddenly a great evil head appeared in the lamp-light, drooping to smell the corpse, followed by the shoulders, forelegs and half the tiger's body. There he stood in the flickering light, while Evelyn strove to "draw a steady bead" upon his heart. But there was no bead to draw (in a shot-gun) and he realised with a sick feeling that by some trick of light and shadow he had only the vaguest idea where he was aiming.

In desperation at last he fired, and the flash at the muzzle of the gun momentarily blinded him. When he could see again, there was no sign of any tiger, no kicking corpse to cheer him. But also no sound whatever, no roar of pain or growl of anger, and emphatically no rush of a body up or down the ravine. Completely puzzled, Evelyn began to wonder if the villagers could be right, that this was no tiger at all but a *bhuth* or evil spirit, that could take the form of a tiger and could also vanish at will, and therefore impossible to shoot.

After some time Evelyn heard Mr. Osmaston's voice, shouting, from uphill about 300 yards away, to ask what happened. He shouted back that the tiger had come, that he had fired and although the tiger certainly had not gone

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away, he could not see him. So Mr. Osmaston, whose nerve cells that control the sense of fear had long since atrophied (if he ever possessed them, which I doubt), came down that appalling jungle-covered slope in pitch-darkness by himself (using an electric torch to find his way and show his whereabouts), convinced there was a maddened man-eater in the immediate vicinity that Evelyn had missed, to see for himself what had happened. Of all the foolhardy acts of bravery I have never heard the like. (Some years before, he had shot another man-eater as it was mauling his friend and saved his life thereby.)

Guided by Evelyn's shouts and the light of his lantern he reached the foot of his tree and, swarming up, flashed his torch up and down the ravine, without discovering any tiger alive or dead. "Oh, you must have missed him, and he has cleared off. Let's go home," he said. Being quite certain in his own mind that if the tiger was not a *bhuth*, it had certainly not cleared off, Evelyn suggested timidly that it was not a bad *machan* as *machans* go, and seemed to be bearing their combined weight quite well, and he would willingly give him half his own blanket. However, he pooh-poohed the idea of staying any longer, so they went stumbling single-file down that horrible ravine in the blackness, with Evelyn behind, and his own behind quivering with tingling apprehension. However, they got back safely to their camp about eleven at night, and Evelyn felt worn out with physical exercise and mental strain.

Early next morning they went off to see by daylight what had happened. Half a mile from the place they were met by the entire local population, who grabbed their legs and touched their feet with their foreheads, in joy that the tiger was dead. Evelyn's single shot the night

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before had gone about 2 feet from where he had aimed (at the heart), and had hit the junction of the spine and skull, causing instantaneous death, and the tiger had simply slipped down behind a clump of tall grass. Mr. Osmaston spent a happy afternoon getting a complete set of human fingernails and toenails from the stomach!

It was nearly time for us to return to Naini Tal for the hot weather and rains. On our way back we spent a few days at Chaubattia, where my husband was in charge of an apple and cherry orchard, the object of which was to encourage the villagers to grow more fruit by selling them fruit trees. The cherries were ripe and we had a grand feast.

The next day I felt very ill, and I shall never forget the discomfort and agony of the march back to Bhowali *en route* for Naini Tal. I travelled in a *dandy* (a chair slung on poles and carried by four coolies). Jogged and jolted as I was, I thought the journey would never end. At Bhowali we called in a doctor, who thought I had eaten too many cherries! We stayed there a few days, but I felt no better, and by the time we reached Naini I was seriously ill. The doctor was horrified at my condition, and quickly diagnosed inflammation of the kidneys. I was in bed for several weeks with a hospital nurse to look after me.

In July our first son was born. We called him Bertram Evelyn—Bill for short.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fresh Ground

THE next cold-weather camping was more complicated now we had a baby to take around with us. We left Naini Tal in October when Bill was barely three months old. Now I wonder how I dared go off into the wilds with a small baby about whose care I knew so little, but at that time I did not worry, for I had no appreciation of the risks I was taking.

We engaged an *ayah*, and I was lucky to find a really excellent woman. She travelled around in a *dandy*. We also employed a man—a Mate—who looked after the baby while the *ayah* was having her meals, and who also helped to carry the *dandy*. He was a most intelligent man, and equally as capable of looking after the baby as the *ayah* herself. It was most amusing to watch the two of them giving Bill his bath. The Mate threaded the needle, which he handed to the *ayah* to sew up the binder, and he held each small garment before the fire before it was put on the baby.

We had now to take a cow with us on our travels, for the milk we had been accustomed to procure from the nearest village was not suitable for a baby. Our cow soon became used to marching 10 to 12 miles every day, and gave ample milk for our requirements except when the calf was excessively thirsty. Indian cows refuse to give milk unless their calf is present. When a calf dies, a frequent procedure is to take off the skin and stuff the hide with straw. The cow, utterly deceived, then continues to give milk.

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A new tract of forest to the east of Naini Tal had been placed under my husband's management. The country was much wilder than that we had previously encountered, and possessed no Forest rest-houses and few bridle-paths. This made touring much more difficult, and my husband expressed his doubts about the baby and me accompanying him into this new territory. I begged so hard, however, that he finally gave way. I thought it would be great fun living in tents. I felt, too, that I had a right to share my husband's adventures and tribulations.

On this tour, because of the lack of rest-houses, we had to take everything with us we might need. This meant carrying two tents, chairs, tables, beds and tubs, as well as all the crockery, kitchen utensils, lamps, etc. We also had to take a two-month's supply of food for ourselves, the cow and the pony. We were bound for sparsely-populated country, where even the few villages that existed would be abandoned by the inhabitants and their cattle for the winter.

Our Swiss cottage tent was just large enough to hold our two camp beds and Bill's cot. The smaller tent we used for a dining-room.

Camping at an altitude of over 6,000 feet in winter had its own particular snags. The chief one was how to keep warm. Our wood-burning stove, besides being a positive danger, smoked so much that we were almost suffocated. Several times the tents caught fire, and were only saved from complete destruction by the fact that the canvas was wet with dew. An oil stove was impracticable, for we could not hope to carry sufficient fuel with us to keep it functioning regularly.

The bridle-path (so called) was very rough, and at times dwindled to a two-foot-wide ledge running across

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a precipice. Even old Tommy (our pony) could not be trusted at such times, so we had to walk. Bill was carried in a contraption called a *doolie*, a small bed slung on poles, complete with rails so that the occupant could not fall out.

A day's march of twelve miles, ascending and descending several thousand feet, I considered but small achievement, although it was dreary and miserable waiting for the coolies to arrive with our tents and baggage at the end of the day. Meanwhile we had to make ourselves as comfortable as we could in a field or under a tree. It was often dark and bitterly cold before camp was pitched.

But I could not complain. Our Indian servants must also have been very tired and hungry, but immediately the loads arrived they bustled around, pitched the tents, unpacked everything, and had dinner ready in an amazingly short time.

On one of our first marches into this wild country we had to climb steadily for about 4,000 feet before reaching our camping place. We were all desperately tired before we arrived about 4 p.m. I longed for a cup of tea, and Jankru Singh collected sticks, made a fire, and boiled water in the small kettle we always carried with our lunch basket. I was also able to heat a bottle for baby.

We sat in a ploughed field to await the arrival of the coolies with our luggage. A few straggled in at about 10 p.m., but the majority of them did not turn up till next day. We had no tents for the night, and no food except a few sandwiches left over from lunch. Bill slept in his *doolie*, while my husband and I rested—and shivered—on the ground under a tree. The coolie who had been carrying my hold-all of bedding had grown tired of his burden and had thrown it down a precipice, from whence it was retrieved next day after a long search.

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As a result of this night spent in the open air, young Bill caught a chill, and I was at my wits' end to know how to keep his tent warm so that nothing more serious might develop. We were several days' journey from a doctor, which did not add to my peace of mind. I decided to bring the oil stove into use. We had sufficient oil to keep it burning low all night.

We went to bed early; but I woke about midnight with an awful feeling of suffocation. The tent was thick with fumes and I could scarcely breathe. Dashing to the outer fly of the tent I flung it open, then woke my husband and ordered him to lift Bill from his cot and take him outside. Our faces, as well as everything in the tent, were black with soot. The stove must have burned higher and higher until finally it belched forth smoke. Had I not awakened, I think it possible we might all have been asphyxiated. It took us days to get ourselves clean, and the inside of the tent never recovered its erstwhile pristine brightness.

There were many bears in this part of the country, and when we were camping near a large forest of oaks, some villagers came to the camp and asked if we could rid their village of a family of bears which was ravaging their food stocks. The bears had killed several people, too.

We arranged to have a beat the next day in the ravine where, according to the villagers, the bears lived. We reached the village about midday and found a group of men waiting to guide us to the ravine, which was a mile from the village. It was a shallow one, we found, running straight down the side of the hill between fields. Narrow at the top, it widened lower down, and there was some thick undergrowth where the ravine began. My husband and I stood, one each side, at the lower end.

When the beaters began to shout and throw stones into

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the bushes, a small baby bear dashed out and came galloping down towards me. I did not fire, however, thinking how cowardly it was of its parents to have pushed it out into danger before they themselves came out to face it.

Next came mother bear, lumbering along. She was on my husband's side of the ravine, and he fired and dropped her. Father bear came slouching towards me through the fields. I waited until he was about forty yards distant and then fired. He rolled over into the ravine and lay there as if dead. After a short while I went cautiously towards him; but when I was less than ten yards away from him he suddenly got up with a roar. I was so startled that I turned and fled up the hill. Then I remembered my rifle and stopped. Fortunately the bear was too badly wounded to follow me, and I finished him off with another shot.

The villagers were very grateful to us for delivering them from these pests against which they had no defence. Jankru Singh was delighted that I had shot a bear. It was my first big game, for *gural* and barking deer hardly count.

It seems that successes, like sorrows, never come singly. Within a week I had bagged, by means of a decoy goat, my first leopard, too!

Luckily, Bill soon recovered from his chill, but a new worry began to confront us. Food was getting scarce. We shot what we could for the pot, and when the larder was empty we lived on rice and dried peas, but even these commodities were none too plentiful. We sank to the level of shooting partridges and pheasants on the ground and in trees. What we lacked most, however, were green vegetables and fruit, neither of which was obtainable.

We had not had enough transport to carry many tins, and often we were short of bread, which was brought out from Naini Tal.

Things grew so difficult that at last I wrote to my sister, who was married to a Forest officer then in charge of the Ramnagar division. I asked her if I could come and stay with her for a while, as we really could not get enough to eat in Kumaon. She wrote back telling me to come at once.

My husband went with us as far as the railhead, from where we travelled by train on a small branch line to Ramnagar. In those days Ramnagar was the nicest forest division in the United Provinces, and therefore in the whole of India. Two splendid rivers ran through it, and the forests provided wonderful opportunities for big-game shooting.

At Ramnagar we travelled around in great comfort, riding on elephants, with our baggage carried behind us by a string of camels. I enjoyed every minute of this tour; sometimes in the evenings, when there was nothing else to do, I sat over a goat for a leopard. Once, not being able to secure a goat, Sybil (my sister) and I sallied forth without one. We climbed a tree and I sat holding the rifle while she bleated like a goat! No leopard came, but some coolies, hearing the cries, turned up to look for the goat. They searched among the bushes for some minutes before they spotted us in the tree; even then they were mystified as to the whereabouts of the goat which they had heard so clearly.

My brother-in-law did not approve of women engaging themselves in big-game shooting, but when he saw how very keen I was to get a tiger during my stay near these marvellous jungles, he did his best to help me.

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After a week or so of our tour, we reached the famous valley of Patli Dun. We stayed at a bungalow here for several days. Patli Dun was renowned for its tigers, and at night we could hear them calling in the forests near the house. During the day we saw their footprints on the roads and in the river-beds.

My brother-in-law tied up some small buffalo baits about half a mile from the bungalow. One night one of these was killed by a tiger. I was so excited at the idea of going after him that I could eat neither breakfast nor lunch. I spent the morning aiming the .360 Rigby Mauser, a fine weapon, which my brother-in-law had lent me—my Mannlicher being of little use for tiger-hunting.

Our plan of action was as follows: my brother-in-law was to go with me to look for the small buffalo, tie up a *machan* for me, and leave me there alone to await the coming of the tiger, which he hoped would be before darkness settled in.

We started out at 2.30 p.m., my brother-in-law and I, on the first elephant. Our "saddle", or *katola*, reminded me of a small bed tied on the elephant's back with its four legs upward, making a comfortable and safe seat. Closely behind us, on another elephant, came the two orderlies with a *machan*, ropes and axes.

We soon reached the place where the buffalo had been tied, at the junction of two fire-lines. We saw the broken rope attached to a small post, and a drag leading away into very thick jungle, with heavy undergrowth and grass. We left the second elephant on the fire-line to wait while we followed up the drag.

It was my first experience of following a tiger drag, and I found it intensely thrilling. Apart from scrutinising the

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ground minutely, we had to keep a sharp look-out in case the tiger were visible. The drag was fairly obvious, but we went along slowly, making as little noise as possible. It is surprising how quietly an elephant can move. There was no sound of tread, only the rustling of leaves as bushes and branches were pushed aside. The drag led towards a dense patch of shrubs, under one of which the tiger had skilfully hidden the buffalo (the hindquarters of which had already been eaten) out of sight of sharp-eyed vultures.

We decided to fix the *machan* in a kusum tree which commanded a good view of the carcass, and then returned to the fire-line to fetch the second elephant. By signs we pointed out the tree, and the orderlies lost no time in climbing it and noiselessly tying up the *machan*. In case the tiger should be nearby watching the performance, we guided our elephant further into the forest, moving very slowly, pausing frequently to peer into every bush and every patch of grass.

In the thrill and excitement of it all I clutched my rifle tightly. My heart was thumping hard. Then, suddenly, the elephant became rigid, and the *mahawat* touched my leg. He whispered *Sher* (tiger). I looked frantically round, searching everywhere in vain. The seconds flew by, and still I could not make out the tiger. The *mahawat* whispered again: "Shoot, Memsahib", and my brother-in-law raised his rifle slowly. I followed the line in which he was aiming, and suddenly became aware of a tiger's huge head, absolutely motionless, staring at us over a bush about 50 yards away. It merged into the background in perfect camouflage.

Already the fact had been impressed upon me that on no account was I to fire at the tiger's head, only at its

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heart. But I could see no part of the tiger but its head, and could not even guess as to where its heart might be. Disregarding all advice, I soon had my sights between the tiger's eyes. I took steady aim, fired, and the tiger fell where it stood shot through the brain. It was a male, measuring 9 feet 6 inches between pegs. The fact that I had been able to take such steady aim was solely due to the skill of the *mahawat* in keeping his elephant still. Incidentally, I had to thank him for spotting the tiger so quickly.

To say I was thrilled at having shot my first tiger was to put it mildly, although I was sorry that such a fine animal was dead. I often felt like that after a kill. I suppose the only explanation is the illogicality of women!

One other experience stands out vividly in my memory regarding this visit to Patli Dun. It happened when the Ranger set out to burn the grassy plain on which our bungalow was situated, the house being protected by closely-cropped grass for about fifty yards on each side of it. The old grass is burned every year so that the cattle may graze on the young green shoots that spring up later. It was a dry year, and the Ranger apparently did not realise that the wind that day was stronger than usual. The fire started at the end of the plain, but instead of burning slowly as it should have done, it came sweeping towards the house in flames forty feet high—a terrifying sight. We were watching from the bungalow steps and I saw a small tent torn up by the rush of hot wind, and go soaring twenty feet into the air. The elephants trumpeted and stampeded, while the camels, a flying mass of long necks and spindly legs, bolted for the river-bed.

The thatched roofs of the stables behind the house

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caught fire. My brother-in-law rushed to try to rescue his horse and cow, but they were so terrified that he could not persuade them to leave the blazing building. Both were burnt alive.

Fortunately the closely-cut grass saved the bungalow, but all the out-houses and stables were gutted; the fire swept on quite out of control, and many birds and small animals were destroyed before the wall of flame was finally broken by counter-firing.

Although I had enjoyed my holiday immensely, I was glad to join my husband again and get back to the routine.

In 1917, to our joy, my husband was transferred to the submontane forests. Although we had been fortunate in staying so long in the wonderful climate of the mountains, we looked forward to a change of scenery and less arduous camping.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fauna of the Submontane Forests

WE spent many years camping in the submontane semi-tropical forests of the Himalayan Terai so famous for their wonderful wild animal and bird life, and a bounteous hunting ground for the sportsman and naturalist alike. A keen student of natural history myself, I was indeed lucky to spend so many years in this paradise.

The submontane and Terai belt has an abundant and varied fauna. The great forests are the home of the tiger and leopard, the sloth bear, the wild elephant, and wild dog. The deer tribe includes the *sambar*, swamp deer, *chital* or spotted deer, and the little barking deer. The antelopes are represented by the black buck, four-horned antelope, and the so-called blue bull or nilgai. Boars and wild pig are also abundant. Amongst the smaller animals are the fishing cat, leopard cat and common jungle cat, the large and small civet, the beautiful black and yellow giant squirrel, and that weird, scaly animal the pangolin, or scaly ant-eater.

There are several widespread misconceptions about wild animals in the jungles, namely:—

- (1) that tigers and bears hide round every bush;
- (2) that it is essential to go about armed to the teeth with rifles and revolvers;
- (3) that snakes are met with at every stage;
- (4) that to enter a jungle is to take one's life into one's hand.

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Nothing could be further from the truth. A man may consider himself lucky or unlucky, according to his point of view, if he sees a tiger once in a year, and a bear once in five years!

With regard to weapons, the sportsman naturally carries them because he hopes to shoot something, but the Forest officer only takes a gun with him if he wishes to supplement his larder. Very seldom does he carry a rifle, and never a revolver.

Snakes, too, I found conspicuously absent in the Terai forest except during the late hot weather and rains, when, in any case, the forests are closed. It is true to say that one is far safer walking in the Terai jungles than in the overcrowded streets of London. There are dangers, however, very considerable dangers; but they are the kind against which arms and ammunition are useless. Wild bees, the anopheles mosquito, and unboiled drinking water cause more worry to the experienced jungle-dweller than the carnivora, pachyderms and snakes.

When I first went to India I regarded the tiger as the epitome of brutality, cruelty and savagery. How quickly I changed my mind! The average tiger, lord of the jungle, is neither cruel nor savage; like man he kills for food, but unlike man he does not kill wantonly for sport. When he kills, he kills efficiently and instantaneously. He does not gloat over the agony of his victims. Completely fearless, he does recognise man as his overlord, and when met by chance on a jungle path he politely turns aside to give the right-of-way. This makes a chance encounter with a tiger a positive pleasure—one of the greatest pleasures of jungle life.

This naturally does not apply to the old and mangy tiger which because of decayed teeth or some physical

defect is rendered unable to fight and kill jungle animals. He usually turns cattle-killer, then man-killer, and finally becomes the terror of a dozen villages. A tigress with young cubs will growl an initial warning but will only attack those foolish enough to blunder too near to her young family. A hungry tiger, enjoying a succulent meal of venison or pork, will not willingly depart from his banquet without protest.

These exceptions, however, do not disprove the general rule that the average chance-met jungle tiger is a welcome, interesting, and friendly acquaintance rather than a source of fear and danger.

When, of course, a tiger is hunted, chivvied and chased, he becomes annoyed. If he can find no way of escape, annoyance turns to anger, and he will attack. And then his armament of claws and teeth, his tremendous energy and power, his superb pluck and fearlessness, combine to make him the most terrifying and the most dangerous animal in all the jungles.

A Terai tiger, on the whole, enjoys life to the full. He is so perfectly suited to his environment that he has no difficulty (unless diseased or maimed) in obtaining an abundance of food which keeps him in splendid condition. His tremendous shoulders and bulging muscles bear no resemblance to the parodies we see in captivity who could no more break the neck of a buffalo or *sambar* stag than a man could snap the trunk of an oak tree.

A tiger usually leaves his mother and family when almost a year old. From then onwards he fends for himself and in due course finds himself a mate, with whom he will often stay for years, raising one family of cubs after another. If the male cubs do not leave home at the appropriate time, trouble is more than likely to arise.

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It is not uncommon for a parent tiger to kill a son who has overstayed his welcome.

We discovered that our tigers' favourite haunts were in the Terai savannahs, or along the margins of streams, or in the foothills where for seven months of the year (December to June) the grasses are red or ochre or brown. These colours blend admirably with the rufous and black stripes of the tiger. In spite of this, however, the eyes of other forest animals, incredibly quick to catch movement, often pierce his disguise, and a tiger's route through the forest is frequently marked by the alarm calls of his potential prey, a *sambar's* harsh bell, a grey monkey's violent A-aa-a-aw.

Magpies and crows chatter and caw vociferously at the sight of a tiger. Perhaps the reason is that these little thieves, who steal a meal from a tiger's kill whenever they can, have been too often disturbed by the tiger's approach not to feel annoyance at the sight of one.

A tiger, on the other hand, feels (and roars) his annoyance at the sight of vultures, those larger thieves who, unless it is carefully concealed and carefully guarded, spoil his kill altogether. He must experience great satisfaction when, as occasionally happens, he manages to kill a vulture that has failed to escape his swift return.

In the cold weather a tiger likes to spend the day basking in the warm dry savannah grasses of the Terai, or a sunny spur in the foothills. He detests the fierce heat of an Indian summer as much as a European, and at such times he is invariably to be found in the cool shady canebrakes of the Terai, or on a patch of damp sand by a shady rock in some wild stream of the foothills.

The tiger's sense of smell is practically negligible, but

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this is more than made up for by his remarkably keen sight and sense of hearing.

The enormous power behind a tiger's spring can be illustrated by an incident when a big tiger, dragging his kill weighing probably $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hundredweights, reached a sheer bank of over 15 feet. Carrying his kill, he leapt this in one bound. I once actually saw a tiger, carrying a full-grown bullock, spring up a sheer waterfall eleven feet high.

The most delightful pet I ever possessed was a baby tiger. A party of cartmen, going to cut grass for their bullocks, came upon two tiny cubs just able to toddle. One of them ran into a hole in a hollow tree, but they caught the other. They placed a big boulder against the hole in the tree, intending to return and catch the other baby tiger later. When they did go back, however, they found that the cub's mother had pushed the boulder aside and gone off with her babe! The other cub the men brought to us.

Within two hours it was sucking a milky rag, within two days it was a well trained pet, within two weeks it was eating quantities of raw meat. Indeed we had to shoot a deer each week to satisfy its appetite. When we were on marches, it sat by my side on the elephant, purring and yapping with pure joy. Within two months it was nearly five feet long, and the elephant, I could see, was beginning to take a dim view of the jungle-bred burden. We decided the time had now arrived for us to part company, so my husband sent it to the Zoo.

Someone once wrote that the tiger is a gentleman, but the leopard is a despicable bounder. My experience showed this statement to be very true. The dog-snatching leopard of hill stations and cantonments is a universal

and unavoidable evil of Himalayan resorts. So is the goat- and cow-killing leopard of jungle and hill village. The man-eating leopard is a perfect terror, witness the famous man-eating leopard of Rudrapryag in Gerwhal, which killed 126 human beings before he was finally shot.

Where tigers abound, leopards are scarce, and vice versa, for, generally speaking, leopards shun the vicinity of tigers.

Leopards are expert tree-climbers and very arboreal. Several cases are known of a leopard being treed by a pack of wild dogs, and it is quite common for a leopard to pull his kill into a tree. I once saw a *chital* stag in a fork of a tree, 15 feet from the ground, in an open place not far from a Forest encampment. Vultures were perched around, hungry but incapable of eating the kill in the tree. The next day, half the *chital* still remained, but it was now 35 feet up the tree, with the hungry and tantalised vultures still hanging about.

The leopard is an adept at making itself "invisible", and it can move as silently as a shadow. While one sits up in a quiet *machan* over a kill, a leopard—materialising out of thin air—may suddenly appear with no sound or sign to herald its arrival.

It is interesting to see leopards hunting in couples. They show admirable team-work. On several occasions I have seen a leopard lying concealed and motionless on the horizontal branch of a tree, while its mate manoeuvred about on the ground, trying to drive or frighten a *sambar* hind, or a herd of *chital* under the tree which hides its partner in crime. Reversing the position, I have seen a leopard climbing about trees laden with numerous brown monkeys, trying to make them scramble to the ground so that the second leopard, lying concealed, could catch one or two before they could seek refuge in another tree.

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The next carnivorous animal in Indian jungles, in point of size if not of importance, is the hyena, probably the most silent animal in the submontane forests. In all the years we lived in this district I never heard a hyena make a sound! How such expressions as "the howling of hyenas" arose is a mystery, possibly due to some confusion with the Indian animal's noisy cousin, the African hyena.

The chief evidence of the presence of hyenas is the characteristic footmarks—large forepaws, small hind-paws—frequently seen on forest roads and paths. On several occasions when motoring along forest roads at night we have "caught" hyenas in our headlights. They would gallop in front of us for two or three miles before turning off into the jungles.

The only other carnivorous animal of any importance in the foothill forests is the wild dog. The size of a collie, and as red as a fox, they usually hunt in small packs of six to ten. The method employed by a pack in killing its prey is, to the human mind, abominable. Quite tireless, they hunt their prospective kill—a *sambar* hind, for example—for miles. Usually they succeed in driving it into an open stream-bed. I once disturbed a pack, in a stony river-bed, ravaging around a *sambar* hind. It was still alive, with flanks bleeding from a score of bites and both eyes bitten from their sockets. But for the interruption, the pack would have eaten the helpless creature alive.

There were many deer in our forests, but only rarely did we shoot these beautiful animals, much to the disgust of our camp followers, who loved venison.

Sambar live chiefly in the hilly parts of the forests, where the undergrowth is most dense. The stags in these parts have poor heads, and are not worth shooting.

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They are not shy if approached on an elephant, which they take to be one from a wild herd always present in these jungles. Often we passed within a few yards of *sambar* hinds. They gazed at us quite unperturbed, their great ears pricked forward. When alarmed they hoist their tails and retreat by means of a sort of goose-step.

Chital (spotted deer) live in open forest, preferably with a light undergrowth of grass. In our jungles the stags of this species were remarkable for their fine heads, and there was always the hope that one would shoot a record. The largest that fell to my rifle measured 38½ inches.

Chital, more timid than *sambar*, live in large herds. There was one particular grassy plain in our division which was surrounded by forest. We were camping there one March and April, when the tall elephant grasses had been burned and the young green shoots made a carpet of green. Towards evening we could hear the rustling of many feet treading on dry leaves, and from the darkness of the forest emerged a few does—obviously scouts. They were followed shortly afterwards by a large herd, the stags walking in a body at the rear. Slowly they moved into the open, nibbling the green shoots as they went, stopping every few moments to listen intently. Sometimes they were accompanied by a herd of swamp deer and a few *parha* and barking deer. We would sit quite motionless watching them. Occasionally, some of them would approach to within five yards of us, and so long as we made no movement they imagined us to be tree stumps—or so we thought—and would pass on after a keen scrutiny.

If one wished to bag a good head, however, it was not easy. There were so many stags, and being so close

together it was difficult to be certain which pair of horns belonged to which body.

We usually contented ourselves with watching the deer until darkness fell. When we moved, the peaceful scene ended. There would be a chorus of shrill "ao ao aos" from the deer, and the whole herd would dash like the rushing of a mighty wind for the shelter of the forest.

In swampy places there were herds of swamp deer. The stags have fine heads with front tines, and the main horns branching into seven or eight points. They lie up in the thick grass, making sitting places for themselves which look for all the world like large nests. They make exceedingly difficult targets, for most of the time they are submerged in the gigantic grass, appearing only occasionally to view the country ahead of them. One has to be very quick to align one's sights and fire before the animal disappears.

There are also *parha* (hog deer) in the plains, and four-horned antelope—small animals, but very nimble and difficult to hit.

For bird-lovers the Himalayan submontane tracts provide a variety of species which is equalled only by the astonishing numbers.

The game-birds, on which the Forest officer frequently depends for fresh meat, include peafowl and junglefowl, partridges, pheasants, and pigeon. Where adequately protected, peafowl multiply astonishingly. In the early cold weather they are found in swarms in the rice fields of the jungle villages along the foot of the hills. Cunning and tireless runners, the best way to shoot them is by organising small beats. This also is the method used to shoot junglefowl, and quite useful bags can be obtained in patches of semi-wild hemp.

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The black and grey partridge and the larger and rarer swamp partridge claim the notice of those interested in natural history, while in the Siwalik hills the little hill partridge is sometimes seen, but more often heard. The only pheasant that comes down to the foothills is the *kali*, but the slow-flying crow-pheasant, which is neither a crow nor a pheasant, often fools the novice sportsman into wasting a cartridge. The principal pigeons are the blue rock pigeon, but one or two species of green pigeons are also to be seen. Doves of various sorts swarm in and around the jungle villages, while the beautiful bronze-winged dove is now and then glimpsed in the deep shadowy glades of the Terai forests.

In the cold weather the numerous lakes and swamps of the Terai swarm with unnumbered birds of all descriptions. Many of them provide splendid shooting, especially the wild geese, duck of all sorts, and several kinds of snipe.

From the lakes and swamps we pass in natural sequence to the rivers and streams, where another association of birds is found. The noisy and conspicuous Brahminy ducks thrive in considerable numbers on big rivers, tantalising the sportsman with their cunning. Graceful river terns flick slowly over the waters, or preen themselves on the sandbanks. Black cormorants are frequently seen, and more occasionally small flocks of mergansers or saw-bills, which look like sporting birds, but unfortunately are quite inedible because of their fishy and filthy taste. On the smaller, pebbly streams, lapwings, in twos and threes, occur abundantly. When disturbed, they plaintively enquire—"did-you-do it, did-did-did-you-do-it——?"

Other denizens of the rivers include splendid fishing eagles, ospreys, and the handsome rufous Brahminy kite.

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Kingfishers are abundant everywhere, including the pied variety and that little jewel, the common Indian kingfisher.

The patches and belts of cultivation in the Terai and submontane zones swarm with all manner of birds. The most prevalent (and most destructive to the crops) is perhaps the parrakeet. These raucous birds have formed a screaming background to a thousand of our camps.

The village buffalo herds are always accompanied by parties of dazzling white egrets. These confiding birds, though generally found stalking round the legs of their buffalo hosts, sometimes perch on their backs and perform a definite service by ridding their skins of leeches, ticks and other parasites.

Vultures of enormous size and repulsive appearance are everywhere, both in jungles and village lands. But they perform a necessary work in scavenging and rapidly cleaning up the bodies of dead animals.

Amongst the more remarkable birds of the submontane forests, the great hornbill ranks high, although it always strikes me as a prehistoric survival. They are extremely noisy birds, emitting strange and various sounds from their enormous bills. Indeed we once met a shooting party setting off armed with many rifles, convinced that a pair of tigers were fighting furiously in the neighbourhood. They found it difficult to believe our assurance that the noise they heard was only a couple of hornbills having a quiet chat!

The night noises in the jungle are swelled by the calls of many birds of nocturnal habits, particularly owls and nightjars. These latter are fond of squatting on forest motor-roads, and when caught in the headlights of an approaching car, their great eyes, clearly visible over 100 yards away, glow like brilliant rubies.

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Crows, magpies, bulbuls, flycatchers, minivets, sun-birds, woodpeckers, sandpipers, quails, storks, herons, bitterns, and a host of other species add their interest to the teeming population of this bird paradise.

I never tired of learning more and more about the fauna of the submontane forests, and my research added considerably to the pleasure and interest of forest life and camping.

CHAPTER SIX

Camping in the Submontane Forests

I SOON discovered that camping in the submontane forests was very different from camping in the hills. We had two elephants supplied by the Government, and my husband made full use of them when he inspected the jungles, and when we set out together on our march days. Our kit was carried by seventeen camels capable of carrying two tons of baggage. Forest bungalows, furnished with tables, chairs and beds, were spaced out over the divisions at convenient intervals. Instead of a toil, camping was now a luxury. We made our own bread, manufactured our own butter, and shot game for the pot, or killed a sheep from the flock that accompanied us. Fine vegetables were sent out daily from a Government garden.

But what thrilled us most was the wonderful opportunities offered us for shooting and fishing. The division contained two fine *mahseer* rivers, and some of the best game jungles in India.

Our favourite method of hunting was that of *ghooming*, or wandering about in the forest on an elephant in search of any sort of game. The elephant was usually saddled with a *katola*, although a *howdah* gives a better view over high grass and is perhaps safer if the elephant is charged by a tiger. But we preferred, perhaps a little perversely, to use a *katola*.

We were lucky to have a really wonderful *mahawat* called Bisharat Ali. He had a fine face, clean-shaven with sharp features and piercing eyes. He was quite fearless and a great hunter of big game.

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I had only one objection to riding through the jungle on an elephant. One had to be so alert to avoid coming into contact with the overhead branches and creepers, which were often enveloped in large sticky cobwebs with horrible hairy spiders attached to them.

Shooting from an elephant requires practice, although much depends upon the way the *mahawat* manoeuvres the huge animal to present the target in the best way to the rifle, and his ability to keep the elephant still while the shot is being taken. We had one elephant that actually held her breath when her *mahawat* ordered her to do so. The average tame elephant of the plains district is liable to run a mile at the smell of a tiger, and such an animal would, of course, be quite useless for the delicate refinement and subtle skill of shooting tiger by *ghooming*. The success of this particular method depends essentially on a good deal of luck, a good knowledge of jungle craft, a first-class *mahawat*—and a perfectly-trained elephant.

Although *ghooming* is by far the most sporting method of shooting tigers, it is also uncertain, for the average tiger roams over at least 50 square miles or more of jungle, and the chance of finding one by blind *ghooming* is very remote. The obvious thing to do, therefore, is to anchor or locate a tiger in some suitable locality. For this purpose we used to tie up little buffalo baits on fire-lines, jungle paths, or the banks of sandy streams where tigers love to roam, and in places where, if he killed, he might be expected to lie up nearby, undisturbed during the daytime.

Our men set off at sunrise, visited the different spots, and brought back the live baits and information of any kill. When a kill was reported, we set out after lunch with our elephants. One was loaded with a *machan*,

ropes, rugs, cushions, etc., for sitting up over the kill until sunset, if we did not find the tiger *ghooming* first. We rode on the other, armed and ready to shoot if the opportunity came—as it did when I shot my first tiger.

This is the most exciting of all *shikar*. If we suspect the presence of a tiger within a few hundred yards of us, we have to disturb him, but not sufficiently to frighten him away. Sometimes there may be indications in which direction to look. For example, his footprints may be visible leading away to his lie-up, or, better still, the distant alarm call of monkeys, deer or birds. More usually, however, there are no footprints, and silence broods over the jungle. So we slowly wander about here and there, eyes and ears alert to catch any movement or sound, and watching the elephant for signs of the tiger's presence. An elephant possesses a highly developed third sense, and will often wind a tiger long before a human can see or hear him. But that is not all. She will indicate with her trunk the direction in which to look. Thus we slowly wander on, depending on sight, sound and scent to locate our quarry.

The tiger of course sees or hears us first, that is inevitable. He is lying in heavy grass or thick cover, while we are moving about on an elephant. If he is in heavy grass he will slink away unseen, but his direction is betrayed by alarm calls, and he can be easily followed. In tree forest, with low undergrowth of knee- or waist-high grasses and shrubs, the tiger usually gets up silently and stands watching our approach until, at forty or fifty yards distance, we suddenly see a great striped head and two cocked ears peering round a tree stem. We stop the elephant, but not our violently beating hearts. From now on, every move and action will be in slow motion, to

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avoid frightening him at all costs. It is seldom that the first glimpse gives a possible shot, but there is no hurry, and if we do our part properly we may confidently expect several more opportunities during the next quarter of an hour. And so we manœuvre the elephant, a step at a time, sometimes losing sight of our quarry, sometimes seeing the tip of the tail or a few vague stripes, and occasionally a nice clear view. In this way we have shot about one-third of our total bag of tigers (including the largest, 10 feet 3 inches).

Quite often the *ghoom* fails. The tiger may not be within the quarter-mile circle where we range, or he may be up in broken hilly country or impenetrable canebrake where the elephant cannot follow. He may even seek refuge in heavy elephant grass where he cannot be seen. Or—why should we deny it?—he may be just too clever for us! In such cases we return to the *machan* and my husband or I sit up, usually myself, for the discomfort of sitting still for several hours does not bore me.

There is another method of locating roughly the whereabouts of a tiger or a leopard—a method which we often tried. It is based on the fact that a mere glimpse of a tiger or leopard will make most animals (and some birds) give their characteristic alarm calls. Every species of deer has its own distinctive call; so has the big grey monkey (*langur*) and the small red fox, but not the bear or the pig. Among the birds, peafowl, junglefowl, magpies and crows have their characteristic noises of alarm. All these help to locate a tiger or leopard as they prowl through the jungles.

Whenever I heard one of these alarm calls while out *ghooming*, my pulse quickened with excitement as I turned the elephant in the direction of the call. The call

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told me a tiger or leopard was somewhere nearby, but did not tell me which, nor exactly where. The odds were very much in favour of the hunted (the greater the odds, the more sporting the method), but once in a dozen or score of times I was enabled to get a shot at, or at least see, my quarry.

The more well-known method of beating was rarely used by lonely Forest officers. Indeed, during the many years of service my husband had in the submontane forests, he only arranged a few beats for tiger. We preferred the other methods.

My husband and I were novices at tiger-shooting when we came to the submontane forests, and had to gain our knowledge by bitter experience. We made practically every mistake possible, and, having rectified one, suddenly forgot another which we thought we had thoroughly mastered. Of course the time we could devote to the sport was limited. We had not the money to buy many small buffaloes, so those we did procure were reserved for really good places.

Bill was now old enough to enjoy camp life thoroughly. On march days we all three rode on one elephant, and as we went along my husband taught us the names of the trees and shrubs. We were very keen on our butterfly collection too, and sometimes on the march we would see a specimen we wanted badly. At once we would ask the *mahawat* to secure our "prize"—which he usually did. I am sure he thought us quite mad.

On halt days, Bill would go off with an orderly to catch butterflies or, if we were near a river, to fish. I was usually busy with household duties.

When we reached the rest-house at Dikala, we were delighted at the lovely valley which lay before the

bungalow. We tied a buffalo in the valley one evening, and the following morning the orderlies reported that it had been killed by a tiger, and, judging by the footmarks, a very big tiger.

We went to the spot on elephants and the orderlies tied our *machans* in two suitable trees, and left us to await the tiger's return. We sat very still. I had an irritating cough, and endured agonies in suppressing it.

When I heard the soft pad-pad of feet my heart palpitated so quickly I could scarcely breathe. Then a huge tiger came slowly into view from underneath my *machan*, and walked slowly towards the kill. I had the chance of a beautiful heart shot, but like a fool I decided to repeat that shot which had proved so deadly with my first tiger—namely, a bullet clean between the eyes. As the tiger walked slowly round the kill, I hoped every minute that he would allow me the shot I desired. He sniffed at some elephant droppings which seemed to alarm him, for he seized the kill and began pulling it away towards the high grass. The tiger's head was shaking so much that I found it difficult to get a certain shot, and I was still aiming when my husband fired. The report made me jump, and before I could get my sights on him again the tiger had bounded away.

I had learned my lesson, and in future I took the first good shot presented to me. Later, when we examined the ground, we found fresh blood. My husband's shot had hit the tiger! The jungle was very dense, however, so we decided to wait until the following day before following him up. We did—and found the tiger dead!

One of the bungalows we stayed at during our march was on a bluff looking over a wide valley covered with forest and grassy plains. In the far distance, to the east,

we could see the mountains across the frontier in Nepal.

In the cold weather there is a cattle station near the bungalow, and there are sawyers and wood-cutters in the forest. In the rainy season the whole aspect is changed; the cattle station is deserted, tall grass grows all round the sheds and there is no work in the forest. The whole country is left to the wild animals, the mosquitoes, the scorpions and the snakes.

In these forests lived a herd of wild elephants, members of which habitually visited the Forest bungalow in the rains. They broke open the doors, and baby elephants even went inside smashing up the furniture and the windows, and generally creating havoc. Their droppings were found in the rooms, proving that they were the cause of the trouble. My husband had to apply on two occasions for new furniture to replace that destroyed by elephants!

On one occasion, one of our officers had to visit this bungalow in the monsoon. He went on an elephant, taking his kit on another. The bungalow had been closed for many weeks, with the matting put away on the tables. As his servant removed the matting and put it on the floor, several scorpions ran out of the roll. The officer disliked scorpions immensely, so he decided to sleep on the verandah, placing a lantern on the floor by the bed on which he slept. He woke up to feel something crawling on him, and to his horror saw it was a scorpion. Several others were crawling up the mosquito net, while the ground near the lantern was a living mass of them. He yelled for his servant and between them they swept up two whole basketfuls of live scorpions, which they promptly burned in a fire.

Once, when we were staying at this place, I noticed a

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tiny earthenware bowl of milk standing on a ledge of an outside wall of the house. In the milk someone had placed a marigold. I wondered why it was there, but made no comment. Servants do peculiar things in India.

The *ayah* told me she had seen a snake in the bathroom, but it had escaped down the hole through which the water flowed out. A few days later, when Bill was having his midday sleep, I went into the room and saw a snake coiled round the rail of his bed. My heart stood still with horror, but fortunately the snake was at the foot of the bed and I was able to lift the boy out to safety. I called to the servants, who soon killed the reptile. It was a krait—one of the most deadly of poisonous snakes. On making enquiries, we found the caretaker of the bungalow worshipped this snake, and it was he who had been feeding it on milk. Then I remembered the milk and the marigold. My husband dismissed the servant forthwith.

Bill was out one morning, collecting butterflies along a forest road, when he saw a large elephant feeding on a clump of bamboos not far from where he stood. He and the orderly watched it for some time, and then went on their way. Shortly afterwards they met my husband, who was returning from an inspection, and told him what they had seen.

The elephants in this part of the forest were a nuisance. There was one tusker who was especially dangerous. He had killed several people, and was proclaimed a rogue. My husband had been after him on several occasions, but had never had a chance of a shot.

From the description Bill and the orderly gave of the elephant they had seen, he at once suspected it was the rogue. He decided to take a different route to the bungalow, missing the forest road.

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Half an hour later the tusker, for it was he, chased a woman who was walking on the road, caught her up in his tusks and threw her into the air. She fell on a huge tuft of grass, which no doubt saved her life, but one of her legs was broken. She was discovered by some travellers, who brought her to the bungalow. We rendered what first aid we could and then sent her in a litter to the nearest hospital several miles away. Bill had had a fortunate escape, we decided.

Several sportsmen came to hunt the rogue at different times, but he was never shot. He disappeared for several months at a time, and finally went away for good, probably across the Sarda river into Nepal.

I loved the camps near the rivers, where we hunted crocodiles. There are two varieties—the mugger and the garial. The mugger has a blunt snout and lives on flesh, sometimes attacking men and women who go down to the river. Silver bangles and ornaments have been found in the stomachs of muggers after death. The garial has a long, sword-like mouth and is a fish-eater. It grows to a huge size—18 feet or even longer.

A crocodile has only one vulnerable spot—where the neck joins the body. A shot on this point kills it instantly, and it does not move. Any other shot may wound, or even kill, but the chances are the reptile will dive into deep waters where it can never be retrieved.

I remember well one of our first attempts at crocodile-shooting. Bill and I were down by the river where it ran through a gorge, the sides of which were rocky and precipitous. Here and there was a small bank of sand by the water's edge, on which these large reptiles loved to bask in the sun. From the distance they looked like logs of wood, apparently lifeless, but actually very much on the

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alert. They had to be approached with extreme caution, or they would slide into the water and disappear from sight.

That day we disturbed several before finally I had a shot at one across the river. I stalked it very carefully from the opposite bank and had a steady shot, but missed. I turned my attention to another farther down on our side of the river. It was lying on a small patch of sand directly under a steep cliff. My bullet contacted the vulnerable spot and the crocodile died without moving. The problem was how to get at it. The cliff was too sheer to climb down, and there was no way along the water's edge at the foot of it. We decided to cross the river on the elephant if we could ford it anywhere, and then move along the other side to a point opposite the cliff where the mugger lay. We then proposed to wade into the stream until the elephant was almost out of her depth. The orderly had volunteered to swim the remaining few yards and secure the crocodile by a rope.

We had great difficulty in crossing the river, which was very deep in places, but at last we found a ford, and once we had crossed, it was easy to reach the place opposite the cliff under which the crocodile lay. I had my gun, and we collected a number of large stones which we intended to throw into the river as we moved across, in order to frighten off any lurking crocodiles.

The orderly was eager to get to the crocodile, but I felt uneasy. Supposing he were attacked by one of the many others I knew to be in the pool?

As we waded in I fired several shots into the stream. When the water reached almost to the elephant's saddle, the orderly plunged into the water to swim the ten yards which separated him from the cliff. The river was running

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very swiftly, rushing round the elephant's legs. The orderly had made only a few strokes when he gave a yell and swam frantically for the elephant. I was terrified and fired into the water, while Bill hurled stones as quickly as he could. The orderly seized hold of the elephant's trunk and climbed to safety. Breathlessly he told me he had seen a crocodile near him.

We returned the way we had come and went home.

Next day we brought a rope and lowered a man down the cliff. We soon hauled up the dead reptile. We sent its skin to Cawnpore to be cured and tanned, and in due course it made a good suitcase—one of my many treasured possessions.

There were many pythons living in the forests, but since they hibernate in the cold weather, we did not see them often. We shot several, however, the largest being 18 feet long. A tale is told of a Forest guard who mistook a curled-up python for a tree stump. He sat on it, with terrible results. The snake coiled round him and squeezed him to death.

When we had sufficient skins to make shoes, attaché-cases and photograph frames, we killed no more, for our men did not like skinning them. For hours after they were dead the pythons wriggled and squirmed. It was difficult to load and keep them on an elephant.

Some coolies came to us one day and said they could not do their work because two large snakes were on the road. Would we come and shoot them? By the time we arrived on the scene the reptiles had gone. We searched about for a while, until an old wall came under our attention. Then we saw a piece of what looked like a snake's tail sticking out of a hole. My husband stood ready with a shotgun while a Forest guard poked at the

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hole with a long pole. Thinking it was a python, my husband was not in the least alarmed. The python, however, turned out to be a hamadryad (king cobra). It darted out like a flash of lightning and came straight at him. He had not time to think, but took a snapshot which luckily broke the snake's back.

These snakes are exceedingly dangerous and often attack without provocation. They have black skins with gold rings and look very handsome. There were many of them in parts of our forests, especially near the rivers, so it was advisable to have a gun handy when fishing.

I decided, too, to keep a stricter watch on young Bill.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Day on the Nandhaur River in Kumaon

FOR several years we continued to camp in the sub-montane forests in the cold weather, returning to our home in Naini for the hot weather and rains. Then the time drew near that I had dreaded—Bill would have to go to England, and school. It would be a heart-breaking wrench, but I drew some satisfaction from the fact that Bill was old enough to remember camp life and his home in Naini Tal.

The last cold weather before Bill left us was spent in a particularly lovely part of the forest. We did our best to create happy memories for him.

One day we spent on one of our favourite rivers, the Nandhaur. This river is known to comparatively few. From its source to where it breaks through the last foothills, a distance of about 30 miles, it runs through Government reserved forest and is strictly protected throughout. It swarms with fish, including *mahseer*, and the so-called hill trout (which is not a trout), and the unsporting *kalabans*, which feed on slime and algæ, and suchlike things that no fisherman can use as bait. The *mahseer* run from one to seven pounds and, with light tackle, a fly rod and a small spoon, provide grand sport.

Once every few years a natural calamity overtakes this lovely little river, but only twice in twenty years did we see the disastrous results. In April or early May, during the afternoon, when blazing sun has heated up the valley and its waters, an appalling storm sometimes comes over the hills. Continuous lightning flickers, thunder-claps

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crash and reverberate, and there follows a spout of hail impossible to describe or (for those who have not experienced it) to imagine. In half an hour the storm has passed, the sun is out again, and the damage done. In that wild half hour of elemental fury six inches or more of hail has fallen, turning the river into a churned spate of floating hailstones, and dropping the temperature from about 80 deg. F. to 40 or 50 deg. F. The sudden drop of temperature kills the fish in thousands, providing a grand feed for jungle villagers, but ruining sport for the rest of the season.

One of the great charms of this wild river, however, is that the fisherman may at any moment see or hear the denizens of the jungle. The densely-wooded hillsides that shut in the valley, clothed with sal, pine and all manner of undergrowth, are the natural home and breeding grounds of tiger, whose footmarks are clear on the sandy beaches. Frequently, in the early morning or late evening, we have heard the sonorous "Aa-ow" of a tiger in the thickets by the river bank, and less frequently the raucous sawing call of a leopard.

One cloudless morning we were making our way about five miles up the river, scrambling along as best we could. With us were two orderlies and a coolie, carrying a rifle and gun, fishing gear and a spot of lunch.

We were walking quietly up the road which ran 50 feet above the river-bed where the valley was a narrow gorge. Suddenly a tremendous commotion broke out on the further bank, as several members of a troupe of *langurs* excitedly gave their alarm call. Simultaneously a young and beautifully-marked panther stalked out on to the river beach, in full view of the *langurs* on one side and of our little party on the other.

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Interested, we squatted motionless and watched. Apparently the panther wished to cross to our side, but had no relish for the swift and tumbling current. He stood with his forepaws in the water and looked across. The tip of his tail twitched, and he moved down-stream a few yards on to a high flat rock that jutted out into the river.

Crouching low, the tip of his tail still twitching, he manœuvred to get his balance firmly. Then he suddenly sprang into the air, but, failing to reach the further shore, fell with a splash into the mill-race. His spring had taken him two-thirds across, however, and in a moment he scrambled out, to climb up another large flat rock to sun and dry himself. He was now within 50 feet of where we were squatting.

An excited orderly pushed a rifle into my husband's hand, loaded but at safe; I would have much preferred a camera at that moment, however. Frankly I did not want to see the panther shot. It seemed a shame to kill that splendid, unsuspecting brute, but by now my husband had a certain reputation as a hunter to maintain, and if he refrained, our orderlies' untutored minds would regard any hesitation on his part to shoot as funk. Reluctantly, for I could see he shared my own feelings, he fired and killed the panther. We went down and dragged the animal into the shade of some thick shrubs, and then proceeded on our journey up the valley.

Presently we disturbed a covey of pheasants, who made their characteristic bubbling-twitter in the dense undergrowth. A cock fluttered up on a low branch and looked down at us, still twittering. With no hesitation whatever I shot him. This was not sport: it was a delectable and welcome addition to our larder.

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Another mile, and we encountered a charming sight. A *sambar* family, a stag with a poor head, his wife and a sturdy youngster, were cautiously crossing the valley from our side to the other. The hind led, her great ears pricked forward, tail cocked, and moving only a step at a time. She entered the water, and splashed across. In the middle the water reached her belly. The youngster made a dash after her, was washed off his feet and, swimming, was carried 20 yards downstream, where he scrambled safely across and darted back to his mother. The stag followed sedately, and the little family moved into the jungle and were lost to view.

Now the road dipped down to the river, and from here we proposed to fish our way back. We fixed up our rods and lines—a ten-foot split-cane fly rod with 50 yards of line, a three-quarter inch flyspoon, a twelve-foot Hardy steel centre—and cast into a nice run swirling into a deep pool below a little cliff. At the second cast a two-pounder was firmly hooked, and after a gallant struggle safely landed.

After fishing, with varying success, several such runs and pools, we came to one of the biggest pools in the river. Here we saw an astonishing sight—one that dispelled all idea of fishing it. Several families of otters had collected together and were disporting themselves in the pool. Luckily they had not spotted us, and we crouched down and watched them for a fascinating ten minutes. Four of them were sitting up on rocks—evidently on sentry-go—while the rest (eighteen so far as we could count, a quite astonishing number!) were fishing or splashing around.

At last we stood up, and immediately all four sentries gave a bark of alarm. With a tremendous splashing, the

whole colony collected in a bunch on the further shore, preparatory to dashing into the jungle. I had a hasty snap with the rifle, and my bullet killed two together. I ruminated that we were getting a curiously mixed bag today; the orderlies, no doubt, were thinking of the rewards that were piling up for them (in those days ten rupees for a panther and five rupees for an otter).

We skipped the next mile or two, for abundant fresh otter marks showed that the pools had recently been too harried to be worth fishing. We started again at the junction of a big side stream, a really ideal spot. At once my husband was into a lovely *mahseer* of four pounds. While he was playing him, and busy keeping him away from a sunken log at the tail of the pool, our coolie, who had wandered off towards some thick bushes, came running back in great excitement.

We could not attend to him at once, but when the fish was safely landed, he told us he had seen a big snake. Uncertain whether it was a harmless python or the deadly hamadryad (both being found in this valley), my husband took the shotgun and reconnoitred cautiously. Then he saw it, an enormous python. It was 18 feet long if an inch, and looking still larger as he lay comatose, with a swelling in his middle protruding upwards about two feet above the general contour of his body. "Some unfortunate barking deer or baby *sambar*," my husband muttered, "or possibly a *langur*." He gave the python a gentle prod with the butt of his landing net, which merely produced a slight muscular reaction. We decided to leave him to his gargantuan meal in peace.

Then something happened which somewhat marred the end of a perfect day. Half a mile above the spot where the panther was waiting to be retrieved was a lovely pool with

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a swiftish run all through, and a boiling rapid of broken white water below. Here my husband changed to a one-inch spoon and stronger gut, and fished deep. He seemed to strike, but as he raised the rod a fish of 9 or 10 pounds—a giant for that river—came into view. It did not seem to realise that anything was wrong at first, and cruised once or twice round the pool. Suddenly it took alarm, and the reel screamed as it tore down the pool. There was no stopping that rush, and as it entered the rapid below, my husband realised that something desperate must be done. He jumped into the pool to follow, missed his footing, and the next moment was floundering up to his neck in the water.

By the time he had half swum, half struggled out of the pool, the fish was gone, and a good deal of line with it. My husband was soaking wet and had sprained his ankle.

He hobbled down to where the panther lay, and we sent an orderly to fetch the elephant, which had been left half a mile below. In due course we loaded up the elephant with ourselves, the panther, the two otters, some of the *mahseer* and an orderly, and wandered back to the Forest bungalow and a well-earned tea.

These inner valleys of the Himalayan foothills, when strictly protected and seldom shot, can almost be described as a natural zoo, particularly when the monsoon has banished man, the disturber of the jungle, for several consecutive months. The Forest officer, whose job takes him into such places again and again, has opportunities, vouchsafed to few, to experience a day such as I have described.

It was now time to return to headquarters, and on to England on leave.

We were two days' march from the nearest railhead

when my husband went down with fever. The first evening his temperature rose to 104, the next it was 105. I was greatly worried. We decided we must try and get to a doctor, so the morning after his temperature had been 105 he crawled on to an elephant and we marched ten miles to the next Forest bungalow. That evening his temperature rose another degree. I looked up the medicine book and read: "Very dangerous, seldom recover."

I could not sleep all night. We were still eighteen miles from the railway. The next morning, however, my husband somehow managed to get on an elephant again and we made him as comfortable as we could, but the jolting movements of the animal tried him dreadfully. Bill and I rode our ponies, and we were exhausted by the time we reached the railway with its Forest bungalow close at hand.

I sent for the only "doctor" in the place, but he was little more than a babu. I asked him what I should do if my husband's temperature rose again in the evening. He shook his head and told me that I must leave the matter in the hands of God. He prescribed large doses of quinine, which stopped the fever within a few days. The illness proved to be malaria, and not influenza as I had feared—an outbreak of which, a year or two before, had killed ten million Indians.

When we reached England, my husband had to undergo treatment for six months before he could rid himself of this malaria germ. We had a wonderful leave, which ended all too quickly. We found a school for Bill, and then set off for India once more.

The following year our second son, John, was born in Naini Tal. At the time there was two feet of snow on the ground, and the cold was intense.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Great Adventure

THE Christmas following our return to India marked the greatest adventure of my life!

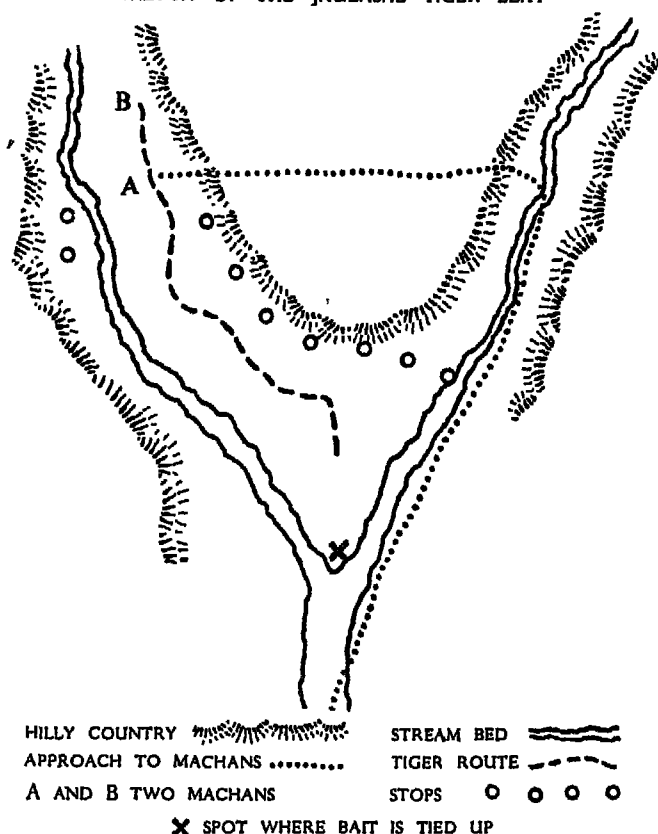
We had invited a friend, Major Percy Dodd, to spend Christmas with us at Jaulasal, in the Haldwani division. We met him at Lalkua, a small station on the O. & T. Rly., whence we travelled on two trollies along the Forest tramway to our bungalow at Chorgalia. The tramway runs through forest in which live all kinds of wild animals, elephants, tigers, leopards, and deer of several species which can sometimes be seen from the line; but on that day we were disappointed to see nothing except *langurs* and a variety of birds.

We spent the night at the Forest bungalow at Chorgalia ("place of thieves") and next morning set out on two elephants to do the nine-mile march to Jaulasal along the *Kandi Sarak*, a road that runs for 150 miles along the foot of the hills from the frontier of Nepal to the Ganges. Here it passes through dense forests of sal interspersed with grassy savannahs—some of the best country for big game in the whole of India.

Jaulasal is a really lovely place. The Forest bungalow is on a low ridge from which one looks northwards up a small valley down which a stream, which has risen in the hills nearby, runs in several small channels. Between the channels are copses of shisham and khair trees, and patches of tall grasses, a favourite haunt of tiger. Once, when *ghooming*, we shot one only 100 yards from the ridge and

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SKETCH OF THE JAULASAL TIGER BEAT



within sight of the bungalow. To the south lies a large plain surrounded by dense sal forest where live innumerable deer.

Our guest, Major Dodd, had never shot a tiger, so we decided to set to work and get one for him. We tied up five or six buffaloes every night on the fire-lines and jungle roads in a radius of three or four miles from the

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bungalow. At daybreak we visited one or two of these ourselves, hoping that if there had been a kill we might catch the tiger before he had left to lie up for the day. Forest guards and orderlies in pairs visited the remaining baits, which, if still alive, they brought home.

The tigers in this part of the jungle obtain so much natural food that they often pass a buffalo-bait untouched.

We had no kill till Christmas Day, although we knew from the footprints that there were several tigers about. On December 25th, Forest guards brought news that a buffalo had been killed about three miles to the east on a fire line. We started off on two elephants loaded with *machans* and ropes. We all had rifles. Major Dodd and my husband were on one elephant and I was on the other. As we were going up the Forest road we met a blind beggar, and we gave him a rupee for luck.

We found that the buffalo had been dragged some way into the forest. We followed the drag cautiously and slowly, keeping a keen look-out ahead for any glimpse of the tiger, and found the carcass well hidden under shrubs. There was a good tree for the *machan*, which the orderlies began to put up as silently as possible. We moved off on our two elephants to divert the tiger's attention from these operations in case he were nearby, and to find him if possible.

We had not gone far when the *mahawat* stopped his elephant and we saw a tiger thirty yards away staring at us. Major Dodd took steady aim and fired, hitting the tiger in the brain. The beast fell where he stood, and we were able to load him up and take him back to the camp.

The next day Major Dodd had a telegram recalling him to his regiment, so the remainder of the shoot fell rather flat, especially as my husband was busy with his work.

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I decided, however, to wander out alone. On December 29th I saw nothing all day and felt distinctly bored. Then, the next day, a Forest guard brought in news that a buffalo had been killed in the famous Riala beat (three miles to the west of Jaulasal, right up against the foothills) where many tigers have met their fate, and where I nearly came to a tragic end.

The buffalo had been tied near a small stream adjacent to some heavy jungle and terrific *narkal* grass—a perfect lie-up for a tiger. We decided to have a beat, and it was Evelyn's turn to have the number one *machan*. We were not very excited about it, and I remember spending a busy morning with the washerman and mending clothes.

After an early lunch we set out with our two elephants loaded with *machans*, etc. A Forest guard, orderlies and a few coolies accompanied us. On nearing the place where the buffalo had been killed, my husband and I climbed down from the elephants, the *machans*, ropes and rope-ladder were loaded on the coolies, and we made our way on foot, making a large detour behind a ridge in order to avoid disturbing the tiger. We wore rubber shoes and walked as silently as we could, uttering not a word. I know I went on tip-toe most of the way, which is extremely tiring when kept up for half a mile. At last we reached the spot behind all the thick cover where we hoped the tiger was lying up.

The tiger invariably breaks cover here by a certain tree. In this tree my husband's *machan* was tied. Another tree was chosen for my *machan*, behind and slightly to the north, about 50 yards from tree Number One (see map). Our orderlies were adepts at tying up these seats. Our *machans* were made of four pieces of wood (like a frame for needlework, but about 2½ feet square), laced across

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with twine. They had iron rings at the four corners through which ropes were slung and tied to convenient branches on the tree. I watched the men erecting my *machan*—a task they performed with great care and with the minimum of noise.

I did not know then that my life depended upon the quality of their work.

At last all was ready, and I climbed up a rope-ladder to my *machan*, which seemed to have been placed unusually high. I hated climbing rope-ladders, but again my life depended upon the fact that the *machan* was a good height above the ground.

A few moments later the orderlies untied the ladder and I was left alone in the tree.

My husband also ascended to his place by the rope-ladder, and sat with his back to me, facing the thick cover where we hoped the tiger lay. I could see my husband over my right shoulder.

The orderlies and Forest guards climbed up trees to act as stops in case the tiger should try and break to the right or left. One man returned to the elephants to tell the *mahawats* that all was ready for the beat to begin.

I felt a little nervous and apprehensive as I waited. I scrutinised my tree to see if I could climb any higher should the tiger attack me, but realised that this was impossible. I had not camouflaged myself in any way with leaves, thinking it unnecessary to do so in a beat. I was armed with my .256 Mannlicher, not a suitable weapon for tiger-shooting, but having accounted for four tigers with it I felt pretty confident so far as my weapon was concerned. My husband carried a .400/450 high-velocity double-barrelled rifle.

A long time seemed to elapse before I heard the noise of

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elephants moving through thick grass. The beat was done with only two elephants. Our wonderful *mahawat*, Bisharat Ali, was on one of them, quite unarmed except for the *gujbar*, an iron spike with a hook attached. With this weapon he controlled or punished the elephant by jabbing it into its head or ear.

The elephants came nearer and nearer, and I saw my husband raise his rifle and fire. The tiger had walked out of the grass well in front of the elephants, but I had not seen it. At the shot, the beast bounded back into cover, roaring and growling furiously, but quite uninjured.

For a long time the tiger lay up in the terrific grass and refused to move. When the elephants tried to advance he roared and demonstrated. Once he charged Bisharat Ali's elephant, but she stood her ground while Bisharat shouted and threatened with his iron hook.

The other elephant did not possess such magnificent courage, and fled from the scene until stopped by her *mahawat*!

I heard the awful noise that was taking place and felt extremely worried. I imagined that the tiger had been wounded and was attacking the elephants, and realising that the *mahawats* were unarmed I was fearful for their safety.

In order to force the tiger out of the grass, Bisharat Ali sent his elephant directly into a small tree, which cracked and fell almost on top of the tiger. The infuriated animal, moving fast and roaring loudly, bounded out towards my husband's tree. I saw my husband raise his rifle and fire, and then the tiger galloped off in a north-easterly direction. Whether the beast had been hit or not I did not know, for tigers will often dash off thus when fatally wounded. I took hasty aim and fired when the animal

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was crossing my front about 50 yards away. The tiger crashed over at my shot and lay rolling on the ground. I decided to try and finish him off with one shot and, taking careful aim at his neck, fired again.

The tiger was throwing himself all over the place, and the neck is indeed a bad target under these conditions. My shot proved as bad as my decision, and I missed him completely. Then I saw the tiger raise himself on his front legs, turn, and look straight at me. The next moment he charged at my tree, roaring hideously. I thought he must be dashing past, but to my intense horror I realised that he was climbing up the tree like a cat. I only just had time to stand up on my *machan*, which was slung out from the trunk of the tree. While I was doing so I pulled back the bolt of my rifle and slipped the third cartridge of my clip of five into the breach.

The tiger arrived up at the *machan* almost instantaneously, and seized the front part of it in his teeth (if I had not stood up he would have had me by the legs), with one paw on the right of the *machan* and the other on the left, so that I had only a very small space to stand on at the back.

I felt too frightened to be afraid, if that can be possible. I thought that if I put my rifle in his mouth and fired, the beast would be killed forthwith; his mouth was open so I pushed the rifle between his front fangs (the teeth marks were afterwards found nine inches up the barrel) and pulled the trigger, and kept on pulling. But nothing happened. A misfire!

I felt as if I were having a nightmare. How could I cope with such a desperate situation? The tiger had one end of my rifle, and I had the other. The barrel of it was clacking about between his teeth, and as he roared blood spattered all over me.

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I might, I suppose, have ejected the bad cartridge and loaded another, but it would not have been easy with the rifle swaying about. No doubt the clip would have jumped out, as it had a habit of doing. But in any event I was too confused by now to think of trying to load another cartridge. All I could think of was to withdraw the barrel from the tiger's mouth, if I could, and hit him on the head with the stock. I was about to try this when the tiger's paw, with which he had been scratching all this time on the right of the *machan*, came through the string seat, tearing a great hole in it. The next moment the beast had grabbed at my legs. To avoid his claws I stepped hastily backwards, quite forgetting in my dilemma that I was in a tree. There was no question of throwing myself from the tree. I simply found myself with no foothold, and fell!

As I did so I imagined I was going straight into the tiger's mouth. I remember thinking, "Surely I am not going to be killed like this!"

By now I was so terrified that I must have lost consciousness. I can recollect nothing of my fall, but I must have turned a complete somersault and landed on my feet. My body was not even bruised; only my left wrist, which I must have used as I reached the ground to break my fall, was sprained.

The next thing I remember is coming to my senses when I ran into a fallen tree. I think I must have straightened myself up immediately upon reaching the ground, and run quite unconsciously, fortunately in the right direction. Now I was in control of my faculties again, I imagined the tiger would be after me, and I wondered whether to try and hide or whether to run on. I decided upon the latter course, and again fortune took me towards

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the tree where my husband was ensconced. I looked up and saw him staring at me with his eyes starting out of his head. I saw his mouth working, but no sound reached me.

I must now go back again and relate what my husband had been doing in the meantime. During my nightmarish adventure I had completely forgotten he was anywhere near me.

When he had fired the second shot at the tiger and it had galloped off towards me, he had turned hastily in his *machan* (it will be remembered he had his back turned towards me), and in doing so had swept all his spare cartridges off the *machan* on to the ground. He had only one cartridge left in his rifle and one in his pocket.

He had seen me fire and had shouted "Good shot" as he saw the tiger fall. He had watched me fire my second shot, and then to his horror and amazement the tiger had charged me. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the beast climbing my tree.

He realised, of course, that he must do something at once, and had fired at the tiger when it was half-way up the tree. His bullet had hit the tiger but had not wounded it mortally. Moreover, he had to take the risk of hitting me, which had unnerved him extremely. He had then to reload, and while he was doing this he saw me having my tussle with the tiger, my rifle in its mouth. He had fired again—his last cartridge—fully realising that my life depended upon his shot. By the grace of God his bullet went true and found the tiger's heart.

I had not heard either of these shots. Just before he fired the last shot, my husband told me, he saw my headlong fall from the tree, and later the tiger fell almost on top of me. He could not see much of what happened on the ground because of the underwood and grass, and

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he did not know what was happening. He dreaded to hear my screams if the tiger were mauling me. His agony of mind can be well imagined. There he was, powerless to do any more, while I was on the ground, probably being killed by a tiger mad with fury. He yelled frantically to the *mahawats* to bring up the elephants.

When he saw me running towards his tree he was, of course, tremendously relieved to see that I was alive and apparently unharmed. He shouted that help was coming, and almost immediately I saw Bisharat Ali tearing up on his elephant.

All this time I expected the tiger to spring on to me at any moment. Usually I had to be helped on to an elephant by someone holding its tail to make a step for me; but Bisharat Ali gave me a hand, leaning down from where he sat on the elephant's neck. I put my foot on the elephant's knee, and the *mahawat* hauled me up by way of the trunk.

I collapsed on to the pad, and, still thinking the tiger might be on us at any second, I told Bisharat to make off as quickly as possible down the stream. I was now unarmed, having left my rifle in the tiger's mouth in the tree.

After going a little way we stopped. I was beginning to feel the reaction to the shock I had suffered. My teeth were chattering, and I was shivering violently. I was conscious of a sharp pain in my wrist.

Bisharat Ali was very concerned because my face was covered with blood. He feared that I had been scratched by the tiger, and I had to reassure him many times that the marks on my face were due to my falling over the tree, which had brought me back to consciousness, while the blood he saw had been spat over me by the tiger.

Meanwhile the other elephant brought my husband

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from his *machan*. He, too, needed much reassuring about the scratches and the blood. Had the scratches been done by the claws of the tiger it would have been a serious matter for me: we were two days' journey from a doctor, and a tiger's claws are highly poisonous.

A stop, who had been in the tree near mine, had climbed to the topmost branch of his refuge and had witnessed the whole incident. He now shouted that he could see the tiger lying dead at the foot of the tree. My husband, having retrieved his lost cartridges, went over to make sure that this was so. I told him to leave the tiger where it lay; that I never wished to see it again. My request was ignored, however, and he had the tiger loaded up before he joined me on my elephant. We went back to the bungalow, where I had a large dollop of whisky in my tea. The tiger, a male, measured 9 feet 6 inches round the curves.

In some ways I had been fortunate, but in others I had been most unlucky. I was fortunate in that the *machan* had held firm; for had the ropes broken under my weight and that of the tiger I should have had no chance of survival. Moreover it was almost miraculous that I had not been injured when I fell fifteen feet backwards. On the other hand it was most unlucky that I should have had a dud cartridge when the barrel of my rifle was in the tiger's mouth; and it was most unusual, if not unprecedented, for the tiger to climb to a *machan*.

My husband and I would have liked to keep the whole incident a secret, thinking that our friends might be scornful of the mess we had made of it all; but it proved impossible to keep the matter to ourselves. The *mahawats* and orderlies were very excited, and the tale spread far and wide.

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We moved camp after a few days and reached the small railway junction of Lalkua, where the station-master gave a tea party to celebrate my escape. We had a splendid tea complete with gramophone recital in the station yard, and after tea our photographs were taken. Somebody who was at this show sent an account of the tiger hunt to a Calcutta newspaper. Reuter got hold of it and cabled the news to England, where it was published in several newspapers with, unfortunately, many inaccuracies. My husband's parents saw it in print before they received an account of the adventure from ourselves.

Numerous garbled and ridiculous versions of the story have been printed. For example, Count Apponyi, in his book, "My Big Game Hunting Diary," writes as follows:

"The lady fired point-blank but missed. . . . After thrusting her rifle-barrel into the tiger's mouth, and hearing that the cartridge had missed fire, she had in her horror thrown herself off the *machan*, because she feared the tiger would climb up, and she thought she would be safer on the ground."

The truth is that I neither missed the tiger at point-blank range, nor did I intentionally throw myself out of the tree!

One of my husband's contractors asked for permission to hold a fête in honour of my deliverance from the tiger. This took place at Chorgalia. Hundreds of people were present, and my husband's little tramline ran a special train for the occasion. There were dancing girls, fireworks and a band, food was given to the poor, and I was presented with a wonderful address framed in a gilt surround. Later a monolith was erected at Jaulasal near the range quarters on the *Kandi Sarak*, with the following inscription:—

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"This pillar is erected by the Forest contractors and staff of Jaulasal Range in memory of the bravery displayed by Mrs. E. A. Smythies in her hand-to-hand fight with a tiger on 30.12.25, and in thankfulness for her deliverance from this great danger."

For some years after this adventure, if I had any nervous strain or became overtired, I had terrible nightmares, and used to wake up screaming. Once I woke to find myself screaming in the corridor of a Swiss hotel. I hastily returned to my room, but heard many doors opening as people came out of their rooms to see who was, as they thought, being murdered.

Another time I woke screaming in some seaside lodgings. The landlady was so alarmed that she jumped out of bed and sprained her toe against a wardrobe!

These reactions, fortunately, only lasted a few years, after which period I completely recovered and shot several more tigers.

CHAPTER NINE

Mainly about Elephants

IT was about this time that I gradually realised how great was my affection for the Indian elephant—that great, docile, obedient creature that adds so much to the pleasure and amenities of forest life.

We had many elephants during our sojourn in the United Provinces and Nepal, including Balmati, made famous in F. W. Champion's books on animal photography.

I remember that one of our elephants once had a mistake and produced a baby! It was a charming little creature but a terrible nuisance. Before its arrival the mother was cantankerous and nervy, and for several months afterwards we could not use her at all. Nevertheless she marched with us from one place to another, with Master Baby toddling along under her tummy and between her legs. When the baby elephant was old enough he was sent to the London Zoo.

During the uncounted thousands of hours that I spent riding well-trained elephants I could not fail to marvel at the manner in which these huge creatures understand and obey the *mahawat's* signs (given by hands and legs). Commands such as "Stop and hold your breath," "Take a long step," "Break down that branch, and knock over that tree," are obeyed immediately. I have seen the elephant pick up and pass to its rider a coin, a knitting needle, a cartridge or a ball of wool!

Strangely enough, however, a group of well-trained

elephants can become panic-stricken at the gambols of a tiny kid or the yapping of a puppy!

On several occasions wild elephants have passed through our camp at night; more frequently we have met them singly or in small herds in the forests. But they have not harmed us, and we have not harmed them. Live and let live is a good rule for the Forest officer to follow so far as wild elephants are concerned.

Elephants love splashing about in water. "Lo! from his trunk upturned aloft he flings the grateful shower." They are splendid swimmers, too, and once we were lucky enough to witness a string of 32 elephants swimming across one of the big Himalayan rivers. Each elephant was stripped of all gear except a rope round its neck; each *mahawat*, naked except for a loincloth, stood on the elephant's shoulders holding the rope, like reins, to keep his balance. It was a curious sight. One after another, in a long line, the elephants waded out into the river until they were out of their depths. Then they began to swim. They sank until the tips of their trunks and half the *mahawats'* bodies were visible above the surface. Later they surged up until half the shoulders, head and back were visible; then down they would go again—and up and down for all the world like a string of gigantic porpoises rolling across the river. It is a sight which is very seldom seen, as the *mahawats* are nervous of losing their precarious footing and being washed away and drowned in the deep waters. The elephants, however, thoroughly enjoy it.

There is a legend which says that elephants go to some secret valley to die, and that if anyone could find that valley he would make his fortune with the accumulated ivory.

So far as the sub-Himalayan elephants are concerned,

alas! there is no evidence whatever to support the story and plenty of evidence to disprove it. For one thing, there are no secret valleys hereabouts. All the submontane tracts, from Bengal to the Punjab, have been surveyed and mapped, and are frequently visited by men. Any repository of ivory and elephants' remains would thus have been discovered long ago. Moreover, dead elephants are found scattered about here and there in the forests. Evelyn once found a magnificent tusker that had been dead for at least a month. There was no difficulty in finding its position—for within 250 yards down-wind the odour was dreadful. When my husband circled round and came close to it from up-wind, at least two dozen junglefowl flew out of the elephant's belly, where they had been feasting on maggots.

The greatest lover of elephants can never be friendly or make a pet of a *musth* elephant. *Musth* is a temporary state which occurs periodically among bull elephants, probably analogous to the rut in deer, and which lasts for weeks or even months. When *musth*, a tame elephant has to be tied up with strong chains and segregated until the attack is over. Should he escape, until normal again he provides a sticky problem for the surrounding populace. This is well illustrated by the following true story of a *musth* elephant that played havoc with a station-master's feelings.

A large elephant had been lent, along with other elephants, to a shooting party who were camped near a railway line running through the forest. Whether the *mahawat* ignored the symptoms of the *musth* condition is not known, but the elephant suddenly became savage and uncontrollable. The *mahawat* promptly disappeared, leaving his dangerous charge to its own devices.

The elephant attacked a small village the houses of which were built of mud and grass. These he knocked flat, trampling on them and killing two inhabitants. He next turned his attention to the small railway station, which consisted of one small building. The station-master, ticket-babu and some coolies took refuge in a goods wagon nearby, and shut the door. The elephant soon discovered their whereabouts, however, and began to batter the van with tremendous blows and kicks. This set the wagon moving along the line until the far points were reached, when the wagon was derailed and fell over with a crash, babu and coolies all jumbled inside. The elephant renewed his attack with blows and kicks, even putting one tusk through the iron sheets of the wagon. Fortunately for the terrified inmates he grew tired of this game and took his departure.

Next day the members of the shooting party decided to dope the rogue. A number of opium pills were crushed and mixed into some unleavened bread. The elephant had spent the night in the forest, and was seen early in the morning on a small grassy plain. A party of four men approached him with extreme caution, meaning to throw the bread to him when they were within about 30 yards. One man held the bread, the other three carried rifles.

When the party were 80 yards from their quarry, he threw up his trunk and, trumpeting shrilly, charged upon the four men, who were forced to fly for their lives. One of them caught his foot in a creeper and fell headlong. Fortunately for him the other three had taken a different direction, and the elephant had decided to follow them.

They eventually took refuge in the Ranger's quarters, which consisted of a small house with grass-screened

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quarters attached for the Ranger's family, who rushed inside, the elephant hard on their heels. He first tried to smash up this building and take off the roof, but after a while he went round the corner towards the grass-screened quarters. Here the Ranger, to protect his family, fired a gun into the tusker's face, whereupon the beast departed in fury. That night the elephant visited another Tharu village and more damage occurred.

The next morning the party of four decided to shoot the elephant if they possibly could.

They found him on the edge of a small grove of trees. At about 80 yards distant, they saw him preparing to charge again. They stood their ground, and one of the party fired a magnificent shot into the elephant's brain. The huge animal dropped dead. They had been reluctant to fire on previous occasions, because the tusker was a valuable animal and belonged to a Raja. But it had done sufficient damage already.

If only the elephant had been chained when the first symptoms of *musth* had appeared, the condition would have run its course, after which the animal would have become perfectly normal again.

On another occasion some friends of ours were having a shoot at Christmas, when one of the borrowed elephants, a large tusker, became *musth* before he could be tied up. Some of the shooting party were living in a small Forest bungalow, and the remainder occupied tents pitched just outside.

The tusker attacked the bungalow, refusing to let anyone go in or out. This was exceedingly awkward as the kitchen was in an out-building some way from the house, as were also the servants' quarters. Directly he saw anyone the tusker gave chase, and there were several

narrow escapes. After two days the party inside the bungalow were getting desperate, food was giving out, also water, which had to be fetched from a river nearby.

The third day, when the elephant began to pull tiles off the roof, it was decided to shoot him. This was done through a window, but the trouble was not yet at an end. A dead elephant is a problem; he is too heavy to move and if he cannot be buried by digging a pit under him where he lies, he must be dissected and removed in pieces. The wretched shooting party had therefore to leave the bungalow and go off elsewhere. The owner of the tusker demanded compensation of 5,000 rupees, but eventually accepted a lesser sum.

There are three popular methods of catching wild elephants in India.

The *keddah* method, usually employed in Mysore and Assam, consists in driving a herd of elephants into a strongly built stockade, in which they are trapped.

The second method consists in trapping elephants in pits. This method is used only occasionally nowadays, chiefly where it is necessary to be rid of a troublesome, solitary rogue which has been driven out of the overlordship of a herd by a more virile tusker. The outcast wanders alone in the jungle, ill-tempered, dangerous, often *musth*, and a living threat to travellers, jungle villagers, and domestic elephants. A pit is dug sufficiently large to accommodate the trouble-maker, and then carefully concealed by a platform inadequate to support the weight of a big elephant. The platform is finally camouflaged with soil, grasses and weeds. Beyond this pit are stationed some tame female elephants. Normally an elephant is a very cautious walker, and usually taps or

feels the ground with the tip of his trunk at every step to ascertain if it will bear his weight. But on sight or scent of the females, the *musth* elephant loses his natural caution in his sex excitement and, rushing blindly forward, falls into the pit.

The third method, the *jangi* or war *kheddar*, is the most exciting, and is used for catching either a single or a herd of elephants. Tame elephants are specially fed, rice and sugar supplementing their natural food, and are kept in splendid condition. When a herd or a single elephant is located, the swiftest and best elephants set off in pursuit. They are stripped of all pads and *howdahs*, but the *mahawat* crouches low on the neck band, and a man called a *pachwa* stands on a rope loop behind the tail, crouching low. He is armed with a wooden handle or a club studded with blunt nails.

The wild elephant dashes off, the pursuers crashing madly through the jungle after him. Lashed with branches, with smaller trees falling like ninepins in front of them, they are goaded on by the clubs of the yelling *pachwas* to exert their utmost speed. Elephants can develop a wonderful turn of speed for a short burst, but quickly tire. After a mile or so, therefore, the wild tusker turns and shows fight. The domestic females are stopped and the big, fighting-fit elephants go forward to titanic battle. One is filled with admiration at the pluck of the *mahawats*, as they urge their tuskers to in-fighting with the wild one! One tusker attacks head-on, with tusks interlocked and writhing trunks, making what is called *chaudant* (the four tusks fight). Others push and pommel at the sides. After a time the wild elephant gives up the struggle and turns tail in flight. Again the pursuit is taken up; again the wild elephant has to stop. The fight and the pursuit go on

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until the wild tusker is utterly exhausted. Sometimes the fight and pursuit continue for two or even more days.

Finally the tame tuskers close in on him for the last time. Nooses of strong rope are slipped round the exhausted elephant's legs and neck, and he is led off into captivity and tied to a tree or strong post.

For a week or so he is not allowed to sleep, so that relays of trained men can teach him to obey words of command.

This procedure may be considered cruel, but a certain amount of cruelty is inevitable in catching and training wild elephants, and the punishment is well worth the cure. Thereafter, in the service of man, the once wild elephant is well treated and well fed, with three attendants to look after him, until the end of his life.

CHAPTER TEN

A Shoot for Brass Hats

DESCRIPTIONS of big shoots written by distinguished visitors for whom everything has been arranged are rather one-sided affairs. What of those who have to organise and arrange everything? I will try and put this point of view for a change.

A Viceroy wired to the Governor of the United Provinces to arrange a shoot for a party of distinguished nobility from Europe. Would H.E. the Governor kindly take on the job or suggest something?

The Governor wired to the Chief Conservator of Forests, who in turn wired to my husband. As he could think of no one to whom he could wire, he replied that he had booked a shooting block to give some sport to a friend, but would cancel this, and do what he could for the Viceroy's party, stipulating that someone else must arrange for tents and furniture, elephants, transport, messing and drink.

A reply, thanking him for his sporting offer, stated that tents and furniture and elephants would be sent, but he was authorised to make local arrangements for motor transport. A firm of caterers was named who would run the food and drink. The caterers asked 50 rupees per day per head. Unfortunately, the Viceroy's party had indicated that they would bring their own drinks, and only required simple food, for which 5 rupees per day per head should suffice. There was no other course but to run the messing with our own humble outfit.

The party arrived at the jungle station, twenty miles from our shooting block, direct from Viceroy House, New Delhi. So far, they had only seen India in a blaze of oriental splendour, and had been accustomed to the pomp and glory that pertains to Viceregal Lodge and ruling Princes. My husband hired two cars and a lorry, which he thought ample for a shooting party of five, but as the overladen train disgorged its contents, he realised something desperate would have to be done. The luggage in itself was overwhelming.

He started by hiring a warehouse! The Countess and the Baroness had brought between them eighteen wardrobe trunks, which were immediately dumped into the warehouse. They had also brought along two European valets and a maid, who could not likewise be dumped but for whose accommodation we were totally unprepared.

In India travellers always take about with them their roll of bedding, blankets, sheets, pillows, etc., except (as we soon discovered) Counts and Barons. So we had to dive into the bazaar and buy up the complete stock of Indian quilts and some lumpy cushions. Towels were also non-existent, so we added to our purchases a few yards of white *dhotis* (with which Indians wrap their nether parts).

When we finally reached camp there was just sufficient accommodation for our five guests—but none at all for the unexpected valets and maid. There was, however, a tent with one small table and chair and some writing materials. We cleared out the writing materials, put in some quilts, a *dhoti* or two, and some bathroom furniture, and left it at that.

There were no complaints either of cramped accom-

modation or cold meals, though our crockery and servants could not run to ten Europeans simultaneously, and we had to feed in relays. When the party asked for champagne glasses we explained we had tumblers, sherry glasses, and teacups, and they could use whichever they preferred for champagne.

The night of our first tiger was celebrated with the weirdest mixture of drinks I have ever seen—sherry, beer, whisky, champagne and Imperial Tokay! Our hired lorry went daily in search of fresh meat, vegetables, fruit, bread, ice, etc. But once we had to use it for another purpose. A camp follower went down with smallpox, so my husband shipped him off quietly in the provision lorry to the nearest hospital 30 miles away, with instructions to the medical officer to disinfect the lorry after removing the patient. The lorry was away for 24 hours. The distinguished foreigners were not informed of this, and they were rather peeved when the ice ran short next day!

Having studied lists of records of 11- and 12-foot tigers, our guests seemed rather disappointed at the mere 9- and 10-foot samples we bagged. We had to explain that a tiger over 10 feet was quite exceptional, one over 10½ feet was phenomenal, and one of 12 feet was a ——— lie. The biggest tiger I ever saw shot was 10 feet 3 inches and I have seen many shot in the United Provinces. We also mentioned the old story of the alleged 12-foot tigers being measured with special steel tapes beautifully graduated in feet and inches and even quarter-inches, but (unknown to the distinguished guest) each "inch" measuring only 5/6ths of an inch, so that automatically a 10-foot tiger is promoted to 12 feet.

In this shoot the problem (for the organiser) of a tigress with cubs fortunately did not arise. Foreigners

seldom realise that to shoot a tigress with cubs is regarded (in the United Provinces at any rate) as on a par with shooting a vixen in the shires.

Luck was with us all the time. ¹We bagged four tigers, two leopards, one bear, two swamp deer, and one hog deer. Our visitors were very appreciative of our efforts to help them. My husband, of course, knew every inch of these forests, and had a number of young buffaloes tied up as baits in the best spots, beats laid out, etc., the day before the visitors arrived.

The first kill to be reported was, curiously enough, in the famous beat where five years earlier I had had my terrible experience with the trec-climbing tiger. The Baron and the Count and particularly the Baroness were thrilled at the possibility of bagging their first tiger in this famous spot. My husband sat up with the Baroness, in the identical trec where he had first missed and then finally shot the tiger five years previously. Behind the first *machan* he placed the Count and Countess, the Baron in a third, and Count Apponyi in a fourth *machan*, so the tiger would have little chance of escape.

History repeated itself. As the tiger came out, the Baroness, although a very fine and cool big-game shot, missed it completely, and the beast galloped off towards the tree in which the Count and Countess were perched. With a brilliant shot the Count got the tiger in the head, and it rolled over like a great rabbit stone-dead at the foot of his tree—to our enormous relief and to the jubilation of our visitors.

The next day as there were no kills we went *ghooming*, and had great fun with a couple of leopards, one of which was bagged and the other, after much hunting, managed to escape.

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Two days later another tiger kill was reported. The drag led into very thick swamp grass, surrounded by sal forest. Having fixed up our visitors in four *machans*, my husband went with the elephants to drive the tiger, and a stiff job it proved to be. The tiger was most unwilling to leave his cover. Twice he slipped through the line of elephants, so that the process had to begin all over again. The third time a very heavy tiger broke at a gallop to a fusillade of shots. Leaving the ladies behind, my husband followed up the direction the tiger had gone and, helped by an occasional drop of blood, discovered that the prey had gone to cover in another patch of very thick swamp grass 400 to 500 yards away.

It was late in the afternoon, and as the immediate follow-up of a wounded tiger in such dense cover was likely to lead to an accident, it was decided to suspend operations until the following morning.

To cut the story short, next morning the tiger was found dead, and my husband then had to decide whose tiger it was, for most of the party had fired and all were convinced that they had hit it. There was only one bullet wound in the animal, and that was on the left side of its body. As only one of the party (the Baroness) had been in a position to fire on the left side, the decision was much simpler than is usual in circumstances when there is more than one claimant.

A few days later another kill was made at a spot where there was no possibility of a beat, so Evelyn fixed up the Baron and Baroness in two *machans* over the kill, with instructions to sit as quietly as possible and refrain from shooting until a really good opportunity to kill arose.

The "sit-up" proved very interesting. Soon a tigress came out and sat down a few yards behind the Baroness's

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tree (and thus out of her sight) but in full view of the Baron, who was too far away from the animal to shoot with any certainty. He watched it for the best part of an hour until the tigress got up and gave the Baroness the shot for which she had waited. We returned home in triumph in the gloaming, with the tigress loaded on a pad elephant.

On off days we went *ghooming* in the forests and savannahs swarming with game, and picked up various sorts of deer and another leopard. During the last few days of the shoot we had a very interesting experience. A tiger and tigress, a very talkative pair, had taken up their residence in the jungle bordering a stream that flowed near our camp at Jaulasal. One evening the Baron and my husband were out *ghooming* on an elephant when they heard tigers calling to each other. They pushed along in the direction from which the sound came and, guided also by alarm calls of *sambar* and *chital*, got quite close—close enough, indeed, to get a glimpse of one of the tigers. They had retired on to some steep broken ground littered with the dead stems of the big thorny bamboo, but the terrific crackling of the hollow stems under the elephant's feet was unavoidable, so the hunters gave up the attempt for that day.

Two evenings later we heard the two tigers calling, to the usual accompaniment of all manner of alarm calls. While we were pushing along to locate the noises we suddenly put up a huge black bear, one of the hill variety, and very rare in the submontane tracts. The Baroness had shot two tigers already, and asked if she could shoot the bear. Thinking that one black bird in hand was better than two red ones in the bush, my husband cordially agreed, and the Baroness killed the bear with one shot.

A couple of evenings later the Baron and my husband

were again *ghooming* when they heard the two tigers once more. It was the last day of the shoot, and the Baron had not yet shot a tiger. He was naturally most keen to do so. They hunted them for an hour, moving here and there as the noises suggested, but always the tigers gave them the slip.

With a quarter of an hour to twilight left, my husband said there was one bare chance left to them. There was a cattle station across the stream near here, where tigers often kill home-coming cattle. It was just possible that the tigers might be picked up near the cattle station.

Off they moved accordingly, and by considerable luck my husband's guess proved correct. The Baron shot his tiger in the last minute of daylight of the last day! He was very impressed with this manœuvre, which was really more good luck than skill.

All that night the bereaved tigress was roaring up and down the valley for her lost mate, and early next morning we would probably have added her to our bag by *ghooming*, but the shoot was over and so she went free—for the time being, at any rate.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Fishing on the Sarda River

AS promotion came to my husband he had more and more country to cover; in fact we now toured the whole province. We had a car of our own, and a lorry for our baggage and the servants. Young John spent many months of his first years camping round with us in the jungle, just as Bill had done.

The years rolled on, and the time came when John was old enough to go to school, and had to leave us. My husband and I were lonely, and for the first time I felt divided in my loyalties. I wanted to stay with my husband, but my thoughts were never far from my sons—and England. So I compromised and took a holiday in England every eighteen months.

Sometimes, on his longer journeys, I did not accompany my husband, but went off by myself fishing.

The Sarda, one of the big rivers of the Himalayas, was my favourite fishing ground. It drains a few thousand square miles of that great range in Eastern Kumaon and Western Nepal. It is the most easterly of the big Himalayan rivers that the Irrigation Department has harnessed to form the great Sarda Canal System—an undertaking which cost ten million pounds to achieve, and which irrigates I know not how many million acres of cultivation. About 16 miles from the foothills, at Banbassa, are the headworks and great barrage which guide 7,000 cusecs into the canal. In time of monsoon floods, another half million cusecs pass through the sluice gates.

From the fisherman's point of view, this great canal

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system and barrage are of great interest. In the cold weather the canal itself is closed for a fortnight every year, and tens of thousands of fish are thus trapped. The aboriginal Tharus for miles around collect the stranded fish, for which they are most grateful.

The great dam itself provides an almost insuperable barrier for fish migration. True, there is a fish ladder, but it is doubtful if the larger fish can negotiate it. The smaller fish certainly do, and vast numbers jump into the mouths of numerous monsters waiting at the top.

Fish migration is a most fascinating study in the big Himalayan rivers. In March and early April each year, before the snow water from the high Himalayas comes down to increase the flow and velocity of the current, an irresistible instinct seems to force the smaller fish to collect into shoals, usually containing millions of each species. These shoals migrate up the river for 100 miles or more. Sometimes they are *chilwa*, 3 to 6 inches long, sometimes larger fish, 8 to 10 inches long, but they all share the overpowering instinct to get into the upper waters and smaller tributaries, presumably to breed.

The mortality amongst these small migratory fish on their long and perilous journey is incredible. The *mahseer* and the *goonch* (a foul freshwater shark, the fisherman's *bête-noire*) take up their station in the boiling rapids which the little fish have to negotiate, and where the velocity of the current makes them easy prey for the big fellows. The fiercer and more broken the rapid, the bigger the fish.

In the pools and quiet reaches the shoals travel up in comparative safety in long thin lines, hugging the shallows and edges. But when a shoal reaches a roaring rapid the long line becomes bunched up into a clustering mass and the

big fish are galvanised into intense activity. They swirl in and out of the struggling myriads, showers of which hurl themselves out of the water in their efforts to escape. Here the swooping terns take their toll.

While the shoal is running, the excitement in air and water continues, but at last the shoal passes and peace, except for the roar of the water, settles on the run until the arrival of the next shoal.

The fisherman shares the excitement. He knows that with "plug bait" (the comparatively new artificial bait that wriggles and dives in a swift current), or with weighted dead bait, it is only a matter of a few minutes before he will be into a big fish which, with the boiling current to help him, will take out 150 or 200 yards of line in his first screaming rush. The whole atmosphere is supercharged with excitement.

About 10 miles above Banbassa, where the headworks of the canal are situated, is the little township of Tanakpur. We arrived here one year towards the end of March, and spent an unforgettable 10 days up the Sarda valley. Wonderful accounts of the fishing and the frequent runs of *chilwa* greeted us on our arrival. We met friends who had struck *chilwa* shoals in various places, but had lost a good deal of tackle in the process. Forewarned, we sent off a wire for ample supplies of plugs and traces to be sent up to us—and we thanked our stars afterwards that we had taken this step.

Six miles above Tanakpur is a small hut and camping ground called Baramdeo, where the great river finally breaks through the Himalayas. The foothills rise abruptly 2,000 or 3,000 feet out of the plain. Here the Forest Department operates a timber boom—a string of floating logs across an enormous pool. This is securely anchored

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with hawsers and catches the pine sleepers that float down in their thousands from the extensive forest of the Sarda catchment. Here also was a stout boat and a couple of *sanais*.

A *sanai* is a beheaded bullock skin, blown up tightly with air, and with the four legs sticking up in the air. On this flimsy but buoyant contraption a *sanaiwala* lies on his tummy, while his arms work a paddle on one side and his feet act as paddles in the water on the other side. The centre of gravity is a long way above the centre of dispersion, so that the non-expert who tries to work a *sanai* immediately rolls over. The *sanaiwalas* are so expert at balancing, however, that they even work the oracle (or coracle) with someone sitting on their back! And on this precarious seating we did a lot of our fishing.

The head of the Baramdeo pool is the first of the Himalayan rapids, and one of the most famous fishing spots in the whole Sarda river. The 7,000 cusecs of water leap down a steep slope to hit up against a rocky cliff on the left bank, where part swirls round in a great whirlpool or backwater. The bulk, however, races on against gigantic boulders and rocks fallen from the cliff above, and a tiny goat-track wriggles beside the river rapid and the whirlpool. When fishing from this spot one has the great thundering river on one's right and the deep whirlpool on one's left, and the junction of the two at one's feet. There is no possibility of following a fish, except by swimming, or by use of a boat or *sanai*—all rather precarious in that tumultuous setting.

We had, between us, one strong spinning rod with silex reel and 200 yards of line for big fishing, and one trout rod and 50 yards of line with fly spoon and minnow for "tiddlers", up to 7 pounds. I was to have the big rod, my

husband being perfectly happy with the trout rod and the "tiddlers"—although in that racing current and with only 50 yards of line to hold them, they do not seem such small fry when one is playing them.

We arrived in Baramdeo on a typical early hot-weather, cloudless day, the heat tempered a little here, thank goodness, by cool air over the river and a cool breeze. The boatman and fishing *shikari* met us with the exciting news that a big run of *chilwa* was coming up the pool and rapids, and we must go along straight away. Crossing by boat, we went up the track, and saw our first sight of a run of little fish up a Sarda rapid—a sight we shall never forget.

Numbers of the little fish wriggled up the strong current on the left bank until they reached the backwater, where they seemed to get confused. From one shore to the other, the whole stretch of water near the tail of the rapid seemed alive with big *mahseer*, dashing here and there, while myriads of little *chilwa* were leaping out of the water in bunches where the big fish surged. The screaming terns were diving and dipping, carrying off the fish in their bills, and swallowing them on the wing. We felt as excited as the terns, but we were out for bigger fish.

We fixed up the big rod with a plug bait and a wire trace, and my husband said: "I'll have just one cast to show you how to fish it. Throw out into the current, let the bait come down and round, and reel up slowly at the junction of the current and"—but before he had finished his sentence and the demonstration, the reel was screaming and he was into a 14 lb. fish which raced down to the rocks, turned left into the backwater, and in a quarter of an hour was safely landed.

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Then I took the rod and threw well out into the current. Almost as the plug touched the water an enormous fish took, but this devil did not turn left into the haven. Instead he dashed past the rocks with all the weight of the Sarda behind him. The whole length of 200 yards of line ran out, the reel checked, and—ping!—the fish was gone with a new plug, a new cast and a few yards of line.

As I reeled up sadly, my husband quoted the old proverb about good fish in the sea—and a fresh flurry nearby gave me new hope. We fixed on a new plug and trace, and I tried again. At the third cast, the reel screamed again as a fine fish raced downstream. This time it was inveigled into the backwater, and after twenty strenuous thrilling minutes was safely landed—a 15 lb. *mahseer*.

During the next hour two more fish were hooked and played, 16 and 23 lbs., the latter giving ten nerve-wracking minutes poised at the very point of bifurcation of the current.

By this time I was dripping with perspiration and felt a little weak about the knees with physical exertion and mental strain. It was almost with relief that I saw the *chilwa* swarm had passed on, the terns departed to a nearby sandbank, and all was peace. We called it a day and wandered back to our camp a few hundred yards away with over 60 lbs. of fish.

Next day we went upstream a few miles, in the hope of hitting off the big *chilwa* swarm again, to the famous Kichail run. These rapids are the fiercest and most violent in the whole Sarda river, for the enormous volume of water is confined by rocks to a channel only 30 yards wide, and the proverbial mill-race is a sluggish pool by comparison. When I first saw the run I was almost afraid to approach the water's edge, where the level of the

water is distinctly lower than it is in midstream. The bank is a mass of cyclopean tumbled rocks, which I found difficult to negotiate even with both hands free. Cliffs rise steeply from both banks, and at one place an almost sheer precipice towers to a peak 2,000 feet above the water.

This mountain is very holy to Hindus, and a temple on the top is visited by many pilgrims. Long ago, in time of famine or epidemic or other calamity, human sacrifices were offered here to the goddess Kali, the Destroyer, by pushing victims from a rock high up the precipice.

We had no luck at all that day, so far as fishing was concerned. We guessed the big shoals that had given us such fun at Baramdeo the day before had already moved through, and the big fish were replete and idling somewhere else in consequence.

The next day at the Baramdeo pool was a red-letter day. Soon after breakfast the excitement of the terns showed that there was a run of little fish. This went on for several hours, and provided grand sport. We decided on a new plan of campaign, however. I was to fish with the big rod from the spit on the left bank, while my husband tried the top of the pool and bottom of the run on the right bank, with the small rod and small tackle. Here the current was not so strong and there was a long stretch of slack water at the side where the smaller *mahseer* would most likely be feeding.

So I went across in the unwieldy boat while my husband kept the two *sanals*.

To his disgust, when we reached the spot he found the water was too deep to wade out far, and the edge of the swift current was beyond his reach. He picked up a tiddler of one pound in the slack water, while 20 yards beyond he could see *chilwa* and bigger fish leaping and

darting joyously. A maddening situation, to be sure! Not to be outdone, he told the *sanaivalas* he was going to sit on one of their backs, and try fishing from that rather precarious position on the edge of the strong current.

At first, he admitted later, he felt very wobbly, but with the second *sanaiwala* assisting, a fair degree of stability and security was achieved. With one hand he held firmly to the *sanaiwala's* shoulder, while the other hand manipulated the rod. Obviously, however he could not reel up if the necessity arose, so in the event of his hooking a fish the *sanaivalas* were to paddle down to a submerged shallow sandbank about 40 yards downstream, where he could stand and play the fish.

Almost at once he was into a 5 lb. fish, and everything went "according to plan". This was followed by a lusty 3 lb. and then by a 7 lb. fish which, in that swift water, and on that small rod, gave a fine tussle. But more was to follow.

He had put on a rubber wagtail and thrown it well out into the current. Immediately it was taken by a whale of a fish, which tore down like a flash. My husband went bobbing and racing down on his flimsy *sinaï* at umpteen knots. He was towed down about 250 yards in this way (with 50 yards of line all out) when the fish stopped halfway down the enormous pool. He did not dare leave the *sinaï*, however, in case the fish dashed off again, but as he was stationary in quiet water he let go the *sanaiwala*, and used both hands for the rod and reel.

He applied all the pressure the little rod would give, and after 20 minutes the fish began to move in slowly. My husband was now towing the fish instead of himself being towed, and reeling up short he ventured to step off into the shallow water. Next minute he regretted the

action, for simultaneously the fish tore off again. The pool was 100 yards broad and a quarter of a mile long, and my husband had only 50 yards of line! Luckily he checked in time, and during the next 20 minutes managed to beach his catch. The brute scaled 16 lbs.—the biggest fish my husband had ever landed on his little fly-rod. But for the sturdy *sanaiwalas*, however, he would have lost him in the first 50 seconds.

His total catch for the morning weighed over 60 pounds—nothing phenomenal with a big rod and big tackle, perhaps, but pretty good going with his small gear.

Meanwhile I was having all sorts of fun on the opposite shore, my three fish weighing 50 pounds (biggest 23 lbs.). Between us we topped the 1 cwt. mark.

I was very keen to catch a fish not less than 25 lbs., so at every opportunity I went off to my favourite run to try my luck. After several days I at last got into a big fish, which tore off down the rapids. I played him with great caution, being determined that he should not break the line. I had not fully realised before that a great deal of exertion is required when playing a big fish, especially when the river is running very swiftly.

My two *shikaris* hurled advice at me, but I was too excited to heed it. I held on to my rod for what seemed like hours. My arms ached, my back ached, and my legs became all wobbly. The fish made a number of dashes down the rapids, but each time I managed to edge him into the backwater. Now, I felt, he could not possibly escape, but I still had to be very careful. At long last my two *shikaris* landed him, skillfully putting their hands under his gills. He weighed nearly 28 lbs.—the biggest fish I have ever caught.

My husband's work took him up the Sarda gorge. There

had been heavy fellings in the forest beyond, and it was a difficult business to get the timber out and away. Part of the way it came by ropeway, and then it was made into rafts, which had to be made buoyant with empty kerosene oil tins, for sal timber does not float.

The day before we went up the gorge, a tremendous storm broke upon us. One of the Forest contractors was on a raft with some coolies at the time, and when the storm broke with a heavy squall, the raft capsized and was swamped. The coolies swam to the bank, but the contractor, unable to swim, was swept away and drowned. His body was washed up against the headworks of the canal many miles below.

We went up the gorge in dugouts, which had been made comfortable for us by the provision of rugs and cushions. At the end of the gorge we had to go up the cliffs, a prospect which had alarmed me beforehand. When I actually saw the place I was expected to climb, however, I was terrified. There was no other way, so I had to do it.

The Divisional Forest officer held on to my hand and dragged me along, and I shut my eyes in the steepest places.

At the top we climbed into a lorry which had been brought in pieces up the gorge and up the cliffs.

We spent a marvellous week at a Forest bungalow called Kaladunga—one of the most beautifully-situated Forest bungalows in India, in my opinion, and one of the most remote. We fished most days, but without success.

On the journey back we floated down the river in dugouts. Our niece, who was with us, begged us to allow her to go down on a Lilo. She was a fine swimmer, but we feared she might be dashed to pieces in the rapids, and we could not allow her to take the risk.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Betrayal

A SOLITARY *langur* was sitting high up in the top branches of a tall sal tree catching the first rays of the morning sun. Leagues to the north and west behind him stretched a great sal forest. In a slight depression in front stretched a grassy savannah bordered on all sides by the unbroken forest of sal. This depression was mostly waterlogged during the late rainy season, but now there was a small pool of open water in the middle surrounded by tufted and feathery plumes of grass which scattered a cloud of fluff when touched or shaken, and the tall seed-stems of ulla, the giant of all the spear grasses. It was an ideal spot for the haunts of the swamp deer and *sambar*, and for the carnivora which prey on them.

It was a glorious winter morning in January, a season when morning follows perfect morning with such unfailing regularity that the sense of appreciation of their perfection becomes blunted. Over the top of the further sal belt peered up the distant rampart of the Himalayas, with occasional peaks of glittering snow, a hundred miles away, showing up above the dark contour of the lower hills. The morning sun had sucked up the mist and vapours of the night, but there was a steady drop-drip of dew from the leaves of the forest trees, while the sun's rays, catching a million scintillating drops on the stems and plumes of grasses, gave back the glint of a diamond-studded plain below. There was not a zephyr of breeze to shake away the dew-drops, the air was iced champagne, and merely

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to be alive on such a morning and in such surroundings was blessing and joy enough.

But the *langur* was not thinking of the beauties of his surroundings or the glories of the morning: he was cold and slightly damp, he had all the day before him in which to feed, and his present inclination was to sit in the sun to get warm and dry.

For what crime he had been ostracised and outcast from the wandering troupe of which he must once have been a member I cannot even guess. The native of the jungle will tell you that a monkey sometimes becomes mad for a time, and is then driven away; or during a period of sickness or accident is banished until recovery.

However, as he sat sunning himself on the tree-top, looking down on the forest growth below and peering round some twigs and a branch, the *langur* saw the stripes and form of a superb tiger in the glory of its prime who had that night killed a *sambar* hind, had eaten and drunk, and was now coming to the edge of the forest to sun himself before lying up for the day. The monkey burst into a raucous coughing "A-aa-a-aw", the alarm call of fear, excitement and hate of the big grey monkey, but the tiger took little notice: he stretched himself in a sunny spot on the edge of the grass and blinked with great golden eyes at the welcome sun.

Half a mile away I was out on an elephant inspecting some tiger baits tied up in that vicinity. Suddenly the call of the *langur* came ringing across the open spaces, and I paused. Acquainted with all the phases of jungle lore, and with the cries and sounds of the wild, I knew exactly what the call meant, that a *langur* had spotted the slinking form of a tiger or a leopard, and a sudden desire for the hunt came over me. I moved at once towards the calling

monkey, carelessly at first but with ever-increasing caution as I approached.

Of the larger animals that inhabit the Indian jungles, there are only three, the elephant, the rhinoceros and the bear, whose eyesight and hearing are comparatively poor, and these three, who belong neither to the hunters nor to the hunted, have had no cause to develop the senses of sight and hearing to that incredible pitch of perfection which is the common heritage of all the other animals of the wild. In the never-ending struggle for existence, and in the survival of the fittest, where the lives of the hunted depend entirely on the keenness of these two senses (the sense of scent for some reason plays a comparatively small part in the struggle of life in the Indian wild), it is obvious that it must be so. The eyes and ears of the hunters of flesh must of necessity have become even more perfect and sensitive, to outmatch the senses of the prey on which they live. For the active moving hunter is always at a disadvantage. Not only must he see his prey before his prey sees him, but he must keep watching the movements of his prey during the cunning stalk that brings him within striking distance, and himself remain unheard and invisible. Of all the creatures of the forest there are none to compare with the tiger or leopard for quickness of sight and keenness of hearing.

I knew I could not hope to approach unseen whatever the animal was that had roused the alarm and fury of the monkey. But I knew also the tremendous advantage afforded by immobility, and that the most perfect concealment was a complete lack of movement. Often and often had I sat on a fire-line or barc, open plain, motionless as a graven image, and watched the herds of *chital* come up quite close, all unconscious of my presence until some

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slight movement made me visible and sent them scampering off to safety. I knew if I could but anticipate the path that the tiger or leopard would follow, and lie in wait for him, motionless and partly concealed, then not even those two beasts, who have brought the art of silent and invisible motion to the extreme of perfection—not even they could come close to me without being seen or heard; but my own presence would remain unsuspected. I knew where the animal was now—I could clearly see the grey monkey swearing and staring at the animal below him, on the edge of the grassy clearing. But how could I anticipate where it would go?

The elephant walked silently through the dense tree forest, until we were 60 or 70 yards behind the tree in which the *langur* was perched. Here we paused, listening intently and with my eyes roving for any flicker of movement. Except for the calling of the *langur*, now hidden from me by the intervening trees, there was not a sound or sign of life.

Just here, the trees were so dense that the usual thick undergrowth of shrubs and grasses could not flourish under their deep shade, and the floor of the forest was clear. As the elephant turned I found myself looking down a long aisle bordered with the clean straight boles of the trees, and suddenly I noticed, about 30 yards away, the body of a *sambar* hind. The *mahawat* saw it, too, and turned the elephant towards it. One glance at the broken neck showed me that it was a tiger and not a leopard that I was hunting. For a tiger always kills his prey by jumping on its back, seizing the top of the neck in his tremendous jaws and, by hurling his great weight across, instantly dislocating the neck. A leopard, on the other hand, not having the overwhelming strength and weight and grip

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of the tiger, seizes his prey by the throat and kills by strangulation.

My heart beat fast as I examined the surrounding forest, not with fear, as I knew there was little to fear, but with the thrilling excitement of the hunter. I knew the tiger was a hundred yards or more away from me, and from the kill at the moment, but I did not know when it might return. It might even be on its way back now. A few yards beyond the kill was a gigantic *haldu* tree with thick low-spreading branches, and into this I climbed from the elephant's back, finding an ideal place for concealment. I signalled to the *mahawat* on the elephant to go away and turned myself into a living statue for the next half-hour.

Away in the distance the alarm calls of the *langur* gradually became less and less, and ultimately ceased. After warming himself in the rays of the rising sun the tiger picked himself up and moved on with effortless silent motion. He went through the grass into the open plain to the pool of water in the middle, and there surprised a little barking deer, who scurried off at sight of him. The tiger lapped up a few mouthfuls of water before he turned to lie up for the day. And as the sense of joy and happiness of life came over him he started the deep reverberating boom of the contented and well-fed tiger, which is a noise totally distinct from the angry snarl when he is hungry, or from the nerve-shattering and appalling thunder of his charging roar; a booming call which is seldom heard except in his primeval forests far from the haunts of man.

As he wandered back towards his night's kill, near which he would lie up, he came again within the purview of the big grey monkey, who once more started the vocal expression of his fear and hate. But the tiger cared not,

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and came wandering up the aisle or avenue along which it was anticipated he would come. In my concealment I could follow his movements perfectly. I heard the sudden shrill barking of the little deer away out in the plain. I heard the tiger's booming call floating over the forest and approaching gradually nearer. I heard again the renewed outbreak of the *langur* and, soon after, I caught a glimpse of the great beast himself moving down the avenue of trees towards his kill. The most magnificent sight of the jungle is to see the royal tiger fearlessly and majestically walking along in his native wild, the paramount lord of his domain.

And so I watched him gliding along quietly, undisturbed, as he had returned a hundred times before to a hundred other kills, with mighty muscles knotting and bulging under his glossy skin, stopping every few paces to peer around and listen, for even in his most peaceful and tranquil state his senses of sight and sound can never wholly rest.

Suddenly, at the point where the elephant had crossed the path, a strong scent must have assailed his nostrils. He stopped abruptly, his head sank to the ground. I could hear his long resounding sniffs. He was puzzled. His natural caution at once aroused, he flattened himself to the ground, his striped coat blending so wonderfully with the bars of light and shade that filtered down through the leafy canopy above that, even on that bare patch, he became almost invisible. For the next ten minutes he crouched thus, motionless except for a few inches at the tip of his tail, which twitched ever so slightly from side to side, with every sense alert seeking some hidden danger. His great unblinking eyes were wide open, and his ears were pricked forward.

Sitting concealed in my tree a score of yards away,

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keyed up tensely with the thrill of supreme excitement, I remained frozen to the stillness of a statue, only my eyes alive watching the tiger. Why did I not shoot? Surely a motionless tiger at twenty yards was an easy mark? But the angle for shooting was awkward, and I had devised a safer plan. I could see only the great barred head, which in this position concealed the entire body, and although I believed that my bullet would pierce the skull and penetrate the brain, yet I knew also the danger, the almost inevitable result of a slightly glancing shot striking the mass of curving bone and being harmlessly deflected. So I waited, and my immobility and patience were pitted against those of the tiger.

After ten minutes or so, the tiger seemed somewhat reassured by the complete absence of sound or movement. After all, it was his ingrained nature to depend more on sight than smell. Moreover, if there was any danger he did not wish to abandon his kill, but would move it into a place of safety. So he rose again, and slowly and cautiously proceeded toward his kill, stopping at every step and sniffing at the puzzling smell.

Then I went into action. I knew how much depended on the first shot. I had only a small-bore rifle, the .256 Mannlicher which I usually carried in the jungle, so it was all the more essential that my first shot should pierce deeply into a vital spot. Any blunder or mistake now would mean a wounded tiger.

As he slowly advanced, head lowered to sniff the trail, I moved my rifle into position. As I expected, the tiger stopped instantly and looked up, thus exposing the whole of his unprotected and vital throat. Immediately I pulled the trigger and the bullet embedded itself deep in the great body. The stricken tiger made one tremendous

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bound and then, fighting for breath, dashed blindly off along the trail. In a minute or two his wild mad rush abruptly stopped and he suddenly collapsed in one last flurry, almost below the tree which still harboured his betrayer, the big grey monkey, who at this unexpected reappearance of his ancient enemy once more burst into his song of hate and a hurricane of curses.

I had to follow up and possibly finish off a wounded and infuriated tiger, which I knew (for so the *langur* told me) had dashed away 100 yards, but whether mortally hit and already dead or badly wounded, I had no means to tell. With a quickened pulse, I called for the elephant, climbed down to it from the tree and went to the spot where the tiger had stood when I fired. The great sploshed footmarks made an easy trail to follow and presently I came on some spots of blood, and then more. I was engaged on that most thrilling but deadly form of sport, the following up of the blood trail of a wounded tiger. I was nervous, for if it were not dead and I came on it suddenly, I feared it might leap on my elephant, 400 lbs. of bone and sinew and fighting muscle tearing and ripping, causing my elephant to bolt through the forest with the probability that I should be swept off its back by a branch or creeper.

As my elephant advanced I found the blood increasing, and noticed it was the bright scarlet of the arteries, and not the deep crimson blood of the veins. Then I saw the *langur* peering down, still screaming out his raucous cry of fear and hate, and a little further on I found the tiger lying motionless as if in sleep.

Looking up, I waved a friendly gesture to my unwitting ally, the big grey monkey who gazed down uncomprehendingly. It was naturally beyond the monkey's limited

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intelligence to realise that he himself was directly responsible for the betrayal of the superb beast that lay there on the ground.

The big carnivora have inherited and developed to a wonderful pitch of perfection the art of concealment in the horizontal plane; it is beyond their powers to conceal themselves from view in the third dimension, and many a great feline has met his doom through the instrumentality of those grey watchers in the trees.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Fishing on the Sarda, Kulu and Kashmir

IN March, 1940, my husband retired from the Forest Service in the United Provinces, where he was then Chief Conservator.

For many years I had looked forward to the time when Evelyn would retire and we could buy a house in England and settle down. Alas, the war altered all our plans. His Highness the Maharaja of Nepal asked Evelyn to go to Nepal as Forest Adviser to the Government of his country, so immediately on handing over his charge in the United Province my husband went to Kathmandu to see the Maharaja.

As I could not accompany him, I decided to visit once more the Sarda river, and there enjoy a small fishing expedition of my own. A friend made all arrangements for my stay. I camped at Baramdeo, using the one-roomed bungalow as a bed-sitting-room and having my meals in a tent.

The bungalow is on the right bank of the river, about a quarter of a mile below the famous Baramdeo run, which one can plainly see. I kept a close watch on the water and the terns, which very soon give an indication of a run of small fish.

I had great expectations of good sport. The time of year was right, but the weather was not kind and there was no run of *chilwa*. The first day I tried the famous run, crossing the river in the flat-bottomed boat. This is quite an exciting procedure. The two boatmen row into

the strong current, which then sweeps the boat down and across the river in a wild rush, and sometimes the boat is hurled against the rocks on the far side; but since its sides are protected with iron sheets it is not damaged. The two men then row like mad and gradually the boat emerges into the calm of the backwater that circles on one side of the island, on which I land.

I had a 10-foot spinning rod and a silex reel, and for bait I had a supply of pal-o-mines of different sizes and colours. Occasionally I used a wagtail or dead bait. That day I had no bite at all, nor the next day, although I fished all day and went downstream a considerable way.

The third day I decided to try farther up the river. I started off on an elephant to take me the four miles to the Kichail rapid. The path goes through the fine sal jungle of the low hills. At that time a shooting party was hunting tiger in this block, and I passed the little buffalo baits as I went along.

I had with me two *sanai* men who carried my rod, and helped me over the boulders. Once I fell between two rocks, giving my leg a nasty blow. I was surprised that no bone was broken.

I fished the run from top to bottom, but did not have a bite until I reached the end of the rapid water, where I landed two small fish.

For nearly a mile down-stream from here it is very difficult to scramble along the river bank, and in the heat of the day I found it somewhat exhausting. I was relieved when the rocks grew smaller and I came to a nice sandy bank, where I had a rest and ate my lunch. I did not spend long over this, because time was getting on, and I never found it much use fishing after 3 p.m.

Below the sandy beach is another beautiful run and

here I hooked and landed three more fish. The river then flows quietly and sedately for a mile or more, and as there were no runs to fish and the going on the bank was extremely difficult, I took to the *sanai*. Sitting on the *sanai* man's back, I floated down the river. I hardly dared to breathe for fear of upsetting the whole concern, and I clutched on to my man so tightly that he began to gasp and said he could not breathe. We landed at the top end of the Baramdeo island.

That night we had a heavy storm with thunder and about two inches of rain. The river came down very dirty, making fishing impossible.

My husband was caught in this same storm on his way to Kathmandu, and encountered snow going over one of the high passes, where the path was so slippery that it was not possible for the ponies to be ridden, and he had perforce to walk; the cold was so intense that he could not keep warm although he walked up the steep ascent clad in warm clothes and a mackintosh. The result was a severe chill and fever.

I spent the day doing tapestry. Towards evening the weather cleared somewhat, so I walked down to the river to mark the rise of the flood. On the sand were the fresh footprints of a tiger going into the water, but none returning; so the tiger must have swum across the river and landed on Nepal territory the other side.

I had hopes that the flood would subside during the night, although it was unlikely that the water would clear by the following day. By the next evening, however, it might be fishable.

On the morrow, as I feared, it was hopeless for fishing, but the next day I spied two Englishmen by the river. They turned out to be two policemen I knew well. One

was fishing, and the other had come to watch. We all crossed the river in the boat to my favourite run, where I left the fisherman to fish the rapids from the point of sand dividing the river from the backwater, while I went up the stream to operate.

Having gone up some way, I returned, slowly casting my plug across the river as I went. The bank was a mass of large boulders and rose so steeply that it was difficult to walk, and small avalanches of stones came tumbling down at every step, hurting my legs. The river rushed and roared down at a great rate, and I had no bite for 15 minutes. Then came a jerk and a mad rush. My line flew out, and I ran as best I could, falling several times over the boulders and struggling to keep my rod up. The fish, helped by the rapid water, was making a terrific run; I had 250 yards of line, the last 100 yards being backing.

The fisherman I had left at the pool saw me coming towards him, and he hastily reeled in his line as my fish dashed by down the rapid. I came to the point of the backwater that prevented any further progress downstream. Nearly all my line and backing were out before the fish paused in its rush.

I took the opportunity to reel in a little line, but the fish was off again at once. I tried to edge him into the backwater, but he kept rushing off again, so I had to be extremely careful.

I must have been playing him like this for 15 minutes and was hoping the end was near when he made another rush; and whether I was unskilled or whether the backing was at fault I do not know, but there was a sickening feeling of slackness; the backing had broken.

The policeman said my face was a study of intense disappointment, and I could well believe him. We could

see the line in the water, however, and my *shikari* made a grab for it; but just at that moment the fish was off again and the backing broke a second time. The fish trailed at least 200 yards of line behind him, but he probably rid himself of it fairly soon. I hope he also rid himself of the hook of the pal-o-mine.

Very crestfallen I felt as I sat down to lunch with the two policemen. It was a serious matter that I had no spare line, but I decided to ask our cook to lend me his, which he had made himself.

We had a pleasant lunch in spite of my fishing disaster. It was hot on the sand, but the surroundings were so lovely we did not notice the heat. The sky was a deep blue and the rushing river reflected this wonderful colour; the hillsides were bright with every shade of green. Graceful terns flew near the water, and occasionally a common Indian kingfisher would flash by, a vivid jewel of green and blue.

That evening a car stopped on the road behind the bungalow, and the shooting party hailed me to come and see the tiger they had shot that day in a beat about two miles up the river. They had bundled the tiger into the back seat of the car and there it flopped, in a great heap. I shudder to think of the awful mess of blood and filth that must have been left in that car. The weather was hot, and they wanted to have the trophy skinned as soon as possible. They feared the delay caused by bringing it in on an elephant.

The next day was my last, so I set off early up the river, going by road through the forest on the elephant. I passed the scene of the tiger beat and saw the *machans* in the trees. I had borrowed the cook's line, but there was only 150 yards of it. He had made this line by plaiting

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together three strands of stout cotton. It was very strong, but not being oiled it was rough to throw out and I do not suppose it would be very durable. Our sporting cook was a keen fisherman. He used flour as bait and had landed some big fish on a small trout rod which we gave him. He fished in still water, of course. On one occasion we had done a march by a river, and Cook did not turn up until very late. We prepared to curse him roundly, but when he staggered in with a huge fish weighing 20 lbs., carrying it on a pole with the washerman holding the other end, we could only congratulate him on his trophy.

As I approached the river I was thrilled to see the terns busy fishing, making their plaintive call, and I hastily put up my rod. Mounting to the very top of the terrific run where I had noticed a small trickle of water flowing into the main stream from the rocks, I put on a new orange-coloured pal-o-mine and threw it into the boiling rapid.

It was taken immediately by a large fish, which made a short run and then sank to the bottom like a stone. I was sure I had hooked a *goonch*, and my heart, like the stone, also sank. I pulled harder and harder, with no result. After 15 minutes or so, I told the two *sanai* men to try and dislodge him. One man with great daring went a little way into the stream on his *sanai* following the line down with his arm under the water and jerking it, while the other man held on to the *sanai*. I feared the men might be swept away and dashed to pieces, so ordered them back. They then collected rocks, which they hurled into the water, but it was all no use. As I had no wish to waste more valuable time when there was a run of *chilwa*, I cut the line.

I fished the run down slowly and had several bites, but the fish got off. The water was calmer near the end of the

run, and it was here that I hooked a fish which dashed off down-stream. I ran after it and stumbled over the rocks, risking broken legs at any moment. I had not gone far before I reached a point where a backwater, which I could not cross, joined the river on my right, so that I could not proceed.

The fish went on, and soon all my line was out up to the knot tying it on the reel. I held on grimly; the rod was bending almost double, till I feared it might break. It was at this very place last year that my husband had lost a big fish which went under a rock and rubbed the line apart. I yelled to the *sanai* men to bring their *sanais* so that I might make use of them to follow the fish down-stream.

It was not easy to get on and keep the rod up at the same time, but after one or two attempts I managed it. As we went slowly down-stream, keeping out of the current, I was able to reel in a little. In my excitement I forgot to be nervous of capsizing, and as both my hands were occupied with the rod I even had to let go of the man.

Inch by inch I reeled in a little line. The *sanai* men kept imploring me to stop the fish and not let it go any farther down-stream, whence came the roar of the next rapid not far below. Remembering my recent experience of a broken line, I was fearful of putting too much strain on this one. The fish seemed inclined to stop near a large rock in mid-stream, and we had to manœuvre to keep the line clear.

After what seemed an age, but in reality must have been half an hour, I was able to draw the fish by degrees towards the shore. Every now and then he would dash off, and each time the *sanai* men, fearing he was heading for the rapids, besought me to stop him. When the fish finally tired I pulled him in closer, but the problem was

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how to get off the *sanai* without letting the line slack for a moment. The water was fairly deep up to the bank; I finally flopped in waist-deep and struggled ashore, pulling the fish after me. The *sanai* men literally danced with excitement. The fish weighed 25 lbs.

We went down-stream to the next run. Here I had another bite almost at once, but the brute sank like a stone, and I knew I had on another *goonch*. I tried to pull him out, but it was no use, so I cut the line and lost another new plug.

I had my lunch on a sandy beach, but the meal was rather dry, as my bottle of water had been broken in the excitement. After a rest I had one more good run to try, and here I landed two fish of about 5 and 8 lbs. By this time I was feeling weary, and was glad to climb on to the *sanai* and float peacefully down the river with the fish trailing behind in the water.

Next day I left my camp and drove my car to Bareilly, where I met Evelyn, my husband. His visit to Kathmandu had been very successful, and he had agreed to go as Forest Adviser to the Nepalese Government for three years, the appointment to begin after he had had six months leave in Kashmir.

My husband had not seen John for five years, so we sent for him to come out to us for a long holiday between finishing school and starting at the University. While we were waiting for him to arrive we visited Kulu on the way to Kashmir, where John would, in due course, meet us.

We motored from the U.P. by way of Delhi and Lahore to Kulu. After leaving Lahore, the road to Baijnath is perhaps the best motor road in the Himalayas, but beyond Baijnath it is a nerve-shattering nightmare, with one-way

traffic and numerous control gates that compel one to take ten hours to travel 100 miles!

For several miles the road is half cut, half built out of sheer precipices: the driver, if he is so inclined, spits out of his window into the roaring Beas river a few hundred feet below. On this section I begged my husband to keep farther away from the inner rock surface, during which time his running-board was grazing the low outer parapet and his cigarette-ash dropping into the river.

At the worst and most narrow part of the road, a gigantic notice states: "WARNING BEWARE OF FALLING STONES." A more foolish sign to display at this particular spot I cannot imagine.

Soon after passing this notice we met a large herd of goats, which, however, were able to scramble along the parapet or over our wings and running-board. They were not nearly such a problem to negotiate as—of all incredible things in such a place!—three camels. It was no comfort to us to be told later that they, like the sun, had no business to be there after the day was done!

At length, "half stupefied with open air, drugged with the relentless boom of the engine and extinct with famine" (to quote from the description of a more famous motor trip) we arrived long after sunset at our destination.

We spent the next day exploring the wild and turbulent river, the upper Beas.

The scenery of the valley is superb. The mountains, rising several thousand feet abruptly from the valley, were still abundantly covered with snow, and the neat, well-managed forests of blue pine, deodar and fir, show unmistakably the tender care of the trained forester. The river gleams between thickets of willow and alder, and

holds out an allurements for the trout fisherman which cannot be resisted.

It did not take us long to locate the possible places for fish to lie. More than half the river is a raging torrent, boiling (although ice-cold) over and around gigantic boulders. No trout is likely to stay in that raging torrent. But cast a lure cunningly in the deep backwash behind some great rock on the edge, and skill and judgment will often be rewarded. Even in this comparatively still water, however, no ordinary fly or lure will fish deep enough without being weighted, and one evening my husband's weight brought him the biggest trout we saw caught during our stay in Kulu.

The water was just beginning to rise and to be tinged with snow water, and he was fishing with a large coachman with half-inch lead. He had a couple of determined plucks, which appeared to him to be at the lead and not at the fly. So, always ready to try unorthodox experiments, he cut off the fly and tied a hook to the lead. He immediately hooked, and after an exciting battle landed a 3 lb. fish. The experiment never worked again, and I can offer no suggestion as to why it worked then.

From Kulu we went to Rawal Pindi, where we met John, and next day we drove to Srinagar, Kashmir. All the world knows that Himalayan paradise, where, like Ceylon's isle, "every prospect pleases . . ." so I shall not attempt to describe it, or the roads up to that marvellous valley.

For a month we lived on a house-boat moored on Nagin lake. Some of these boats are very comfortable, well furnished, and the *mullah* in charge is often a good cook. Our boat had the strange name of China Aster.

FISHING ON THE SARDA, KULU AND KASHMIR

We had a sitting-room, dining-room, three bedrooms and three bathrooms, besides a balcony on the roof where we could sit in the sun. It would have been a perfect place but for the crowds of people. We amused ourselves a good deal boating on the lake and bathing.

With the kind assistance of my husband's old chief and friend, Sir Peter Clutterbuck, the Chief Conservator of Kashmir, we were enabled during the next few months to try our luck and skill in most of the famous trout streams and rivers of Kashmir—household names to all keen Indian fishermen. Some of them were the Bringhi and Nowbug, the Sindh and Wangat, the Erin and Madmatti, and the queen of all trout streams in the east, the Kokernag. John was very keen, and proved to be a natural fisherman. I had to give up the pursuit while he was with us, for on most Kashmir rivers only two rods can fish at a time.

Camping, whether for sport or merely to escape from civilisation for a brief spell, is a regular feature in Kashmir. We were rather luxurious and demanded four tents for ourselves, with three small ones for the kitchen and servants. We engaged a Kashmiri cook and he was the general manager of our outfit. Like all Kashmiris he was busy making hay for the lean winter months, but one expects this in Kashmir and his arrangements were really very efficient.

We left Srinagar in June for a camp on the Bringhi, and after that at the end of each week we packed up our camp and trekked off to some other river or beat, if nearby (10 or 12 miles) using pack-ponies and coolies for transport; if further afield, the ubiquitous motor lorry. Thus we sampled many camping grounds, sometimes amongst the willows a few feet (or even inches) above

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high flood level, sometimes on a bluff amid pine trees and the wild iris, sometimes in the shade of gigantic chenar trees.

It was often a problem to know what to do with the fish we caught. Our cook had various ways of cooking the succulent trout, and at the start we revelled in trout at three meals a day, but after a time, cooked ever so skilfully, they began to pall, and after a fortnight John went on strike and refused to look at trout on the table in whatever form they were served!

It is rather expensive sending special messengers 60 or 70 miles into Srinagar with consignments of fish for friends, and there is an unwritten law that you offer nearby fishing parties drinks and food, kerosene, cigarettes, and everything you possess or can spare, but never insult them by offering fish!

One day that stands out of many weeks was the day that John and his father first found their way into the virgin waters and wild and gorgeous scenery of the upper Madmatti; a day that left them thrilled to the core, and exhausted to the marrow. The steep sloping forests of oak and pine came down in many places to the river bank, and but for a tiny and overgrown track, and a few small fields of rice and millet, we might have been the first humans ever to explore that primeval gorge. The local watcher told us that no sportsman had been fishing up there for two years, and we dreamed of big fat unsophisticated fish fighting madly in the boiling, foaming waters. And the dream came true!

At the spot, the waters splashed into a large-sized pool, near the top of which was a small but high island rock, flat-topped and about 15 feet high. My husband's *shikari* told him that many years ago he had come with a Captain

Sahib who from this very rock had hooked and landed a 7 lb. trout.

Excited and full of hope, my husband fixed on a weighted Green Highlander lure, and worked it from the rapid current into the swirl below the rock on which he sat. At the second cast a huge shadow darted out, and Evelyn was into the biggest trout I have ever seen! He made a terrific rush into and across the main current of the river into a backwater on the other side. There was no possibility of following him there, but a long steady pressure brought him at last into the current again, and he turned down-stream and took our 40 yards of line in one rush to the bottom of the pool, where, fortunately, he stopped just above the rapids.

My husband was pondering whether to try and scramble down the rock and follow him, when the trout settled the matter for him by moving up. Evelyn reeled in rapidly. But out in the pool was another large submerged rock, and the fish stopped on the other side of it, so that my husband felt that horrid wriggly vibration which occurs when one's line is in contact with a rock or snag.

Disaster followed swiftly when, suddenly, the line fell slack, and my husband reeled in to find the lower hook of the lure gone, and his lovely monster with it! I tried, but without much success, to comfort him, and the *shikari* also tried with the explanation that Allah had not destined that particular fish to die that day, but how happy we should have been if He had destined it!

And so the fulfilment of the fisherman's prayer—'Lord, let me catch a fish so large that I need not lie about it'—has not yet been vouchsafed to my husband.

However, there was some compensation to follow, for although John and his father did not see any more seven-

pounders, they had the grandest day's sport of all their days in Kashmir with a combined basket of 24 fish totalling about 30 lbs., the largest being $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. John, comparative novice though he was, secured more than half the catch. Ever afterwards, John swore by the Madmatti as the most perfect spot in Asia, but my husband and I, remembering the gentle Devonshire streams and rivers of our youth, the Taw and Torridge, the Dart and Exe, forswear this wild and boisterous river, and we give the gentler Kokernag the pride of place.

Near our camp was a timber chute, pouring forth timber into the river and spoiling the fishing below. A Himalayan chute has been described by a Forest student as follows: "The man on the top pushes the log over, and the man below catches it on the bottom." How rich is the English language, when the substitution of "on" for "at"—both you notice, governing the locative case—can so alter the meaning of a sentence!

After a peaceful six weeks camping and trekking and fishing we returned to civilisation and the golf of Gulmarg. Later, when John returned "by perilous seas forlorn" into the Battle of Britain, we try and forget for a while our gnawing anxieties with further fishing trips to the Sindh and other rivers until it is time for us to leave Kashmir and take up Evelyn's new appointment in the mystical kingdom of Nepal.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Journey to Kathmandu

WE left Kashmir by the famous Banihal pass and motored on through Lahore and Delhi to Bareilly in the United Provinces. Here we sold our car, collected our household goods and belongings, and set out on a forty-hour rail journey for Nepal. We travelled in great comfort in a private saloon complete with kitchen and bathroom, and reached the frontier station of Raxaul one hot, sticky afternoon in early October. That night we spent at the Legation bungalow, a nice house tucked away from the bazaar in a shady garden.

Hundreds of years ago that great traveller and explorer, Marco Polo, wrote of Nepal:—"The country is wild and mountainous and is little visited by strangers, whose visits the King discourages." That policy was consistently followed through the centuries from those distant times till 1950 and, as Landon noted—"Of all the closed lands of this world, closed by the deliberate will and policy of those who live in them, Nepal is the only survivor." With the coming of democracy in the last two years, the Iron Curtain of Nepal is lifting at last. Thus the attack on Everest from the south, the recent ascent of Annanpura Himal, the botanical expedition up the Karnali valley, and other similar expeditions have now become possible.

Throughout the 500 miles of southern frontier bordering British India, armed guards, detachments of the Nepalese Army, prevented the ingress of unauthorised persons, and

even rice and timber traders were prohibited except by permission of His Highness the Maharaja.

But we were entering, not as visitors or guests, but as an official of the State with his wife, with the prospect of thrilling long tours in the wildest parts of the sub-montane forests untrodden by Europeans. We were greatly excited at the prospect of entering the mysterious forbidden kingdom.

The journey to Nepal (as the valley of Kathmandu is called, as one speaks of the valley of Kashmir) starts on the Nepal Government Railway. This must, I think, be one of the smallest railway systems in the world. The total length of the 2 foot 6 inch gauge line is 28 miles from Raxaul to Amlekhganj at the foot of the hills, with three or four intermediate stations. One mixed passenger and goods train runs daily. Normally, no first-class coach is attached without previous instruction and special sanction of the Director-General of the Railway. However, we were welcomed royally, and found His Highness's own coach had been attached for our convenience. It was an act of thoughtful courtesy so typical of Nepal.

It was a lovely cold-weather morning, and the air was crystal-clear. As the train crossed a little bridge that forms the international boundary we obtained our first glorious view of Nepal. Across 20 miles of flat Terai the low Churia range of the foothills was visible, rising 3,000 feet above the plain, backed by tier upon tier of the Mahabharat range, rising to 9,000 or 10,000 feet. Behind this the higher peaks of the great Himalayan ranges thrust up towards the heavens, the giants (all over 26,000 feet) Gosainthan, Manaslu, Annapurna Himal; 150 miles away to the north-west the massif of Dhaulagiri and an equal distance to the north-east mighty Everest itself were clearly visible.

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In ten minutes the train drew up at the Birgunj station. This is one of the larger and more important towns of Nepal outside the Valley, the headquarters of a district, and connected by the one and only telephone system in Nepal with Kathmandu to the north, and for 70 or so miles to the east, and 30 or 40 miles to the west, to outposts and other towns along the frontier. It also contains one of the few commercial factories in Nepal, a small match factory that produces matches for local consumption. Another factory in Nepal is a jute mill in the east. When we first visited Nepal there were no oil mills, sugar mills, flour mills, saw mills, etc., which suffices to indicate the immense scope there is in this fertile kingdom for economic expansion and factory utilisation of its raw products.

For the next dozen miles the train puffed along through unbroken sheets of late paddy, still a vivid green and many weeks from harvest; over an occasional iron girder bridge, freshly painted a bright vermilion, with the foothills gradually rising higher and higher, and finally hiding the snowy peaks. And then we saw before us, stretching as far as the eye could reach on either side, a great wall of forest, a small section of the Terai sal belt that stretches almost without break for 500 miles across Nepal, the home—so we have read—of elephant, rhino, buffalo, tiger, leopard, bear, and deer of all sorts, in uncounted thousands, and the repository of incalculable forest wealth.

We entered this belt abruptly after passing a wayside station called Simara, and very soon the trained forester's eye realised that there was little of the "incalculable forest wealth" on this particular section. Plenty of big trees no doubt, but either of valueless species, or

gnarled, crooked, hollow and useless for timber. The sooner they were removed to make room for something more valuable the better. We registered a hope (subsequently fulfilled) that this was not typical of the great Terai belt. At any rate we knew sufficient of jungle life not to waste time looking for elephants, rhino, etc., round every bush, and were not disappointed to see no wild animal life.

The slope of the track rapidly increased as we climbed the waterless "Bhabar" zone of river boulders and sand, and the little engine puffed and occasionally stopped for breath—perhaps the additional weight of our saloon and luggage was the last straw. At last the train rounded an acute bend through high walls of shingle into Amlekhganj, which is the terminus at the foot of the hills. Amlekhganj means "settlement of freed slaves" and the place is so called because many of the slaves, emancipated in 1924, were given land there.

We made enquiries for a car for ourselves, and a lorry for our three servants and our mountain of luggage. We had brought with us from our previous life a Goanese cook, our old Mohammedan bearer, and a young table servant called Azmat. We found it impossible to hire a car and we ultimately squeezed ourselves and our belongings into a lorry. Evelyn and I and a Nepalese gentleman shared with the driver the front seat, a tight fit which Evelyn eased somewhat by sitting half behind the driver with an arm round his shoulder.

The luggage was the chief difficulty; most of the items were such that they must on no account have anything placed on top of them, for example my tapestry, my violin case, several of my hat boxes, a large mirror and so on, but, above all, the tiffin basket, which was stuffed with

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much new crockery which would certainly be smashed by any weight on top. The servants and various stray passengers indicated their preference for sitting on top of the luggage, and the lorry seemed top-heavy, which by all accounts should be avoided on the road ahead.

At last we started off on the next section of our Odyssey to Nepal, along 25 miles of a good but untarred hill road, which wound around steep spurs and unstable foothills, clothed with chir pine and sabai grass (the bases of the turpentine and paper industries in India) into hollows with stunted sal and beautiful flowering bauhinia, and across dry stony river beds by iron girder bridges, whose wooden floors rattled vociferously under the lorry's impact. After about eight miles we reached the watershed, and paused at the entrance of a concrete tunnel to pay a small road cess at the *octroi* post. This is the Churia pass made famous in Ochterlony's campaign against the Gurkhas 125 years ago, when the last stand of the Gurkhas was defeated by an outflanking movement carried out along a precipitous and almost impossible deer track through the jungle.

We entered the tunnel, which had a bare six inches of clearance above the lorry. Guards were placed at each end to control the traffic, and we went through with our head-lamps lighted. We sailed out into the sunlight, and saw the beautiful Rapti valley below us. We coasted downhill for a few miles, and stopped for a picnic lunch on the bank of a lovely *mahseer* stream. Despite our precautions and rigid orders at the start, somebody had evidently found the tiffin basket a convenient seat, for as we opened the lid a cataract of broken blue plates and saucers fell out, crockery that had never been used, and now never would be.

After this mishap we proceeded on our journey, the road winding along a valley shut in by mountains and slopes that steadily became higher and steeper, until we arrived at Dhursing, the terminus of the wonderful ropeway that transports heavy goods and luggage into the Nepal valley smoothly and efficiently in a quarter of the time that it would take us to cover the same distance.

As it was Sunday, the staff was away, and the ropeway silent, so we had rather nervously to disturb the Subha (a civil rank corresponding to Captain) from his afternoon siesta. After a short time he arrived, wearing the little black fur cap and golden badge of gazetted rank, full of affability and curiosity as to who we were and why we were going to Nepal, and we left in his charge the bulk of our lorry load.

Then on a couple of miles to Bhimphedi, the motor-road terminus, over 50 miles from the frontier. From here for the next 20 miles there is only a rough (sometimes terribly rough) ungraded bridle-road, which in that distance climbs and falls nearly 6,000 feet over two high mountain passes. A motor road to cover the distance would not be a difficult engineering feat, but would spoil the feeling of seclusion and inaccessibility that Nepal so dearly loves.

Here we transferred to *dandy*, pony and coolie transport, all equally sturdy. A Nepali *dandy* bears little resemblance to the light and airy *dandy* of Indian hill stations, but is a massive structure with a good deal of iron work, a heavy leather hood and poles cut from young trees, which it takes eight men to carry.

The pony (from His Highness's own stables) was the typical shaggy, sturdy bridle animal of the Himalayas, with a girth about twice its length and abundance of mane and tail and hair. The coolies were cheerful and efficient

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carrying machines, crusted with dirt, except where little rivulets of sweat had partly removed it. They were not the famous weight-carrying Dotials, who inhabit the extreme west of Nepal, and whom we had seen in hill stations in India carrying enormous weights. (I have seen one carrying a box that weighed 500 lbs. and legend has it that a Dotial once carried a grand piano up to one hill station).

Most of the heavy traffic is now taken by the ropeway, but heavily laden coolies are still met on the road, and I once saw a man carrying 56 empty four-gallon kerosene oil tins, not a very heavy load but a remarkably cumbersome one. The *dandy* coolies were a cheery crowd. They talked and laughed most of the way, and told each other endless anecdotes in Newari, a language even the Nepalese cannot understand. They would be chain-smokers if they could afford to buy enough cigarettes, but being so poor they usually light one at a time and pass it round, each man holding it between his little and fourth finger, making a cup of his hands and taking a good pull without letting the cigarette touch his lips. This enables men of different castes to share a cigarette, and is the universal custom in Nepal.

A 20-mile march was quite beyond our old bearer to tackle on foot, so one coolie with a basket on his back undertook to carry him up and down the 6,000 feet for three rupees (about four shillings and sixpence). The sun had set by the time the cavalcade started, but we had only a three-mile climb of 1,500 feet to reach the rest-house of Sisapani Garhi (the fort of the cold-water spring) where we spent the night.

Once when Evelyn made this trip, he travelled with the British Minister, and was able to see the pomp and cere-

mony in which he travels. A guard of honour turned out and presented arms, and a dozen youths and boys stood in a row, each bearing a portion of the daily present from the Nepal Government to the British representative on tour: a goat, a dish of little fish, a basket of eggs, a bunch of fowls tied together by their legs, a pile of rice, a bowl of milk, sundry fruits and vegetables, and I forget what else. But this time there were no such ceremonies, and we arrived in the dark, weary and longing for a cup of tea.

Next morning we started off early on the tedious trek to Thankot (17 miles), up 1,000 feet to the Sisapani pass, down 2,000 feet to the valley beyond, up again 3,000 feet to the Chandragiri pass, and down 3,000 feet to the Nepal valley.

Despite eight men for the *dandy*, progress was very slow, and here and there the road so alarmed me that I insisted on getting out of the *dandy* and walking. At a particularly narrow part with a precipice on the right a dead buffalo formed an unpleasant obstacle to the passage of my conveyance, and still more for the pony. On top of the first pass—*mirabile dictu*—was a large motor car being carried to Kathmandu by over a hundred coolies. There are about 400 cars and 100 or 200 lorries in the Nepal valley, and every single one has been carried over the mountain passes by coolie labour! Six months later our new Chevrolet car was carried over; it took 120 coolies eight days and cost 600 rupees (£45), but it arrived without a scratch and in perfect order.

We halted in the neck of the pass to admire the view. Behind, the sweep of the valley we toiled up yesterday, leading to the Rapti *dun* and the Churia range, looked very small from here, with the plains fading into the haze beyond. In front, through the speckled shadow of

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oak and rhododendron, another great sweeping valley, rising on the further side several thousand feet to the Mahabharat range, above which towered the high snows, glittering in the brilliant morning sun like molten silver veined with aquamarine.

The road was thronged with traffic, travellers like ourselves to and from the valley. An official of some importance with a gold badge in his fur cap rode on a sturdy pony, accompanied by an armed retinue of half a dozen sepoy and followed by a *dandy* with his lady wife, dressed in a beautiful *sari* and jewels, and a string of smaller *dandies* with handmaidens. We all gazed with curiosity at each other as we squeezed past on the narrow road. Then we passed a little group of ash-smeared *saddhus* returning from a pilgrimage to the sacred temples of Nepal. Another little group of Nepali women plodded along with their babies in shawls on their backs. Then through a small village, the houses of which were part masonry, part wood elaborately carved, lining a narrow street alive with children, chickens and ducks.

A thousand feet above our heads, in a gigantic span of 1,400 yards from pylon to pylon, the ropeway, now working at full pressure, swept across the valley, and we wondered which of the midget loads (they weigh five or six hundredweight each) up in the zenith were our precious belongings.

In single file we crossed the little river in the bottom of the valley by a well-built suspension bridge, the first of several. For some miles the road meandered up the valley, through terraced cultivation of rice and maize and young mustard, while here and there groups of vivid flowers, zinnias, marigolds, and orange cosmos enlivened the scene. It passed through several small villages, in

which could still be seen ruins of houses that collapsed in the great earthquake of January, 1934, which caused tremendous damage throughout Nepal, and particularly in Kathmandu, where many people lost their lives.

After six hours we had covered about eleven miles and began to think of lunch. We passed through Chitlain, a big and very typical Nepali village with wayside shrines and wonderful wood-work, beyond which towered the steep ascent to the Chandragiri pass. The *dandy* coolies intimated they would like a rest, something to eat and a smoke, for which, apparently, we were expected to provide the necessary funds, and we were left in peace and alone in a grassy glade. But it was not long before a little maiden, dressed scantily, and her still smaller brother, dressed in nothing at all, appeared on the scene. They seemed to want something, not chocolate, nor an orange, nor even a *pice* (a farthing) although they condescended to keep it; finally it transpired that their great desire was an empty glass bottle, and the little girl departed in glee, hugging the treasure to her bare bosom.

It was a very steep and wearisome climb to the Chandragiri pass (7,250 feet) but we were rewarded with a most glorious view. Imagine a great amphitheatre of well-wooded mountains 20 miles in diameter, rising 2,000 feet to 4,000 feet from an emerald plain of intense cultivation, which is threaded with a broad river, and dotted with many villages. In the centre of the plain, every detail clearly visible in the diamond air, lies the ancient city of palaces, Kathmandu, and nearby the sacred city of temples, Patan.

The road to Thankot wound down the hill for 3,000 feet through a virgin forest of oaks, magnolias, rhododendrons, hornbeams and a score of tree species quite

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new to us. A wonderful shrub with pink scented flowers was in full bloom, the whole hillside was gay with them. I had brought a book and some knitting to while away the time, but the view across the Nepal valley was so magnificent that I could do neither. The sky was cloudless and the snow mountains stood up crystal-clear. In the far east we could see Everest and Gaurishankar; due north of us a dark and jagged ridge rose up in the middle distance. High up on this ridge, at an elevation of 14,000 feet, is the very sacred lake of Gosainkund (not visible from here) to which thousands of Hindus go to bathe in an annual and extremely arduous pilgrimage. In this lake there is a submerged rock which resembles the figure of Lord Vishnu. The waters must be icy cold, but this does not deter the devout worshippers from bathing. Further to the west again is Ganesh Himal only 40 miles away, the nearest of the high peaks to Kathmandu.

At Thankot we hoped to find a car for ourselves and a lorry for our servants, but the lorry had not turned up. The cook and Azmat, stout fellas! had, we heard, walked on the remaining eight miles to Kathmandu, but that was beyond the old bearer, or the coolie with the basket, who carried him all these weary miles and was a long way behind. So perforce we had an hour to wait for him, and finally arrived in Kathmandu long after sunset.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Life in Kathmandu

WE were very tired after our journey over the mountains; the road had been so truly terrifying that I did not know how I could ever return along it. Indeed, when we arrived in Kathmandu, it seemed as if we had come to the end of the world.

We were surprised to find such a large city with fine roads and buildings, and marvellous bronze statues (made in England, shipped to India, and finally carried over the mountains). The palaces are magnificent and the temples must surely be amongst the finest in the world.

So far as I know, no description of life in Nepal from the European's point of view has ever been written. The few books on Nepal that have been published were written by journalists or globe-trotters or Gurkha officers; in fact, apart from the Legation, only two other Englishmen (and their wives) have resided for a period of years in Nepal. At first we were thrilled at the prospect of living in surroundings which have always been so closely guarded from Europeans.

My husband was never tired of quoting Kipling's well-known lines:—

"The wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Kathmandu", but after a time, when the glamour and romance had worn off, we found we were rather lonely.

There were no hotels in Kathmandu, no residence of any sort for Europeans except in the Legation. The British Minister came to our rescue and allowed us to

stay in the Legation rest-house. He provided food for us for a day or two, until we could organise some commissariat for ourselves. The Nepal Government had kindly promised to provide us with a free house. One was being built for us, but it was not yet ready. The day after our arrival we went to see our future home. It was a one-storeyed affair, with five small rooms in one long line, practically no garden, and the whole surrounded by a high wall barely ten yards away from some of the windows. We realised at once that it would not be possible for us to live in such a place for three years, so my husband wrote to his Director-General saying we would be grateful if we could have a better house and, as we were very fond of gardening, one with a little land attached.

Next day my husband was asked to give a plan and specification of what we should like, for His Highness's sanction. It was grand fun designing our own residence and compound, and we spent an exciting and fascinating evening thinking out what we should like. My husband designed a really nice two-storeyed house with three large sitting-rooms, five bed- and dressing-rooms, bathrooms, godowns, pantry, verandahs, big bow-windows, electric light and fans, etc. Also two acres of ground, with kitchen, garage, five servants' quarters, out-houses, lawns, flower and kitchen gardens, water tanks and water supply—in fact every tiny detail that makes for comfort.

The plans were sent to His Highness, who very generously sanctioned everything we asked for and gave orders that the house was to be built according to our plans, and must be ready within six months.

We found a delightful site between the Legation grounds and the Municipal garden, looking on to the back of His Majesty the King's palace.

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The house was ready in time, and later we created around it a really beautiful garden.

For four of these six months we were away from Kathmandu touring in the Terai forests, which was our annual custom during our years in Nepal. The lack of a house at first did not therefore really inconvenience us.

A few days after our arrival in Kathmandu we were summoned to the Singha Durbar for an interview with His Highness the Maharaja. Before describing the interview I will first briefly outline the system of rule and administration in Nepal, as it then was, in the hope that it may interest my readers.

Nepal is a kingdom and therefore has a King. He was not, however, a constitutional monarch, as in Britain, and had no administrative functions. He held two Durbars every year and was present at the big religious festivals and parades. Apart from these occasions he was seldom seen. The Kingship is hereditary from father to son.

The whole administration and authority rested with the Maharaja, who was also *ex officio* Prime Minister and Supreme Commander-in-Chief. He made all appointments, decided all questions of policy, sanctioned all expenditure—in fact no ruler in the world today could more fittingly claim “L’Etat, c’est moi.” The office of Prime Minister was also hereditary, not from father to son, but to the next eldest male in the family, maybe a brother or nephew or cousin, although, of course, the son’s turn would come in due course. All members in the line of succession bore the distinguished family name of “Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana”, and between them they held all the important offices of State. One would be the head of the Nepalese Army, another the head of the Civil, another the Ambassador in London, and so forth.

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While we were in Nepal, the head of the Forest Department was Commanding General Sir Kaiser Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana, G.B.E., G.L.O.H., etc. His charm of manner and brilliance were irresistible. We became very attached to him. Our first Head Assistant was Pundit M. P. Koirala, a brilliant and able linguist. We recently had a Christmas card from him, and heard he had become Prime Minister of Nepal, a post which had been held by the Rana family for just 100 years.

The system of government in Nepal might have been described as the rule of a benevolent autocrat. In a country where 96% of the population is illiterate, and where such words as vote, election, parliament and democracy have no meaning, it is difficult to visualise any other form of government. The happy, care-free, laughter-loving Nepalese are certainly an astonishing and happy contrast to any other peoples of the East that I have ever seen.

We set off for our interview with some trepidation, anxious to make a good first impression. A State car took us to Singha Durbar, the official residence of the Maharaja, an enormous palace—a Buckingham Palace in the Orient—set in beautiful grounds and with a glorious view of the snows to be seen from the upper windows.

His Highness soon put us at our ease. A fine-looking man with an engaging smile and a merry twinkle in his eye, he showed us great kindness during most of the years we were in Nepal. Later he abdicated, and made long pilgrimages to India's sacred places—a Purun Bhagat in real life!

Soon after, we went on tour and did not return to Kathmandu until April. Our house was not quite ready, so we lived in tents for a few weeks. I had a busy time

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struggling with the workmen in the house, trying to get things as we wanted. For example, we had red cement floors downstairs and polished wooden ones upstairs. I had ordered some red floor-polish, but the workmen said they had something much better, which they proceeded to use. The result was that our feet stuck fast to the polish, and the servants, with their bare soles, found it most painful. The sticky mass could only be removed by scraping the floors with pieces of glass and this took days to do. The walls were still very damp, and we fully expected to go down with rheumatism, but the damp had no ill effect on us at all.

Having fixed up our future residence, we then had to solve the problem of feeding and servants. Imagine arriving in a town 80 miles from the nearest railway station or telegraph office, where a butcher or baker, a grocer or greengrocer, a fishmonger or dairy are unheard of! For several days we lived on the tinned food we had, fortunately, brought with us. Our Goanese cook, bad-tempered at all times, was full of grouses, and life became very difficult. I learned that it was best to import all stores direct from England, but this takes time, of course, and eventually became impossible owing to the war. Flour and sugar had to be ordered from Calcutta and were a month or more on the way. When we needed meat we had to buy a sheep or a fowl and have it killed by our servants. But in course of time when we had everything organised, we lived most luxuriously and very cheaply. For example here is a dinner menu we often had, everything having been produced on our own little estate of two acres: Celery soup, a fine Leghorn chicken with mushrooms and various vegetables, strawberries and cream, and asparagus.

Shopping in Kathmandu bazaar was always a quaint

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experience. Whenever we went out to buy anything we had to take a policeman with us to keep off the crowds who followed in hundreds. The people were always interested in my bare legs, and I could hear them discussing whether or not I had on stockings. Unlike most shop-keepers between Port Said and Hongkong, the Nepali traders were most offhand and independent; take-it-or-leave-it was always their attitude. All sorts of unexpected articles could be picked up, marvellous Italian silks, brassware, Morton's bulls-eyes and toffee, face creams, powders and scents, patent medicines, etc.

One of the great drawbacks of life in Kathmandu was the fact that there was no European doctor. In former times there was always a Legation surgeon, but recently a doctor from the subordinate medical service had taken his place, who would not be adequately qualified to deal with any emergency. There were several good Indian doctors who attended the nobility. If His Majesty or His Highness became ill, a doctor was called from Calcutta.

During our first year in Nepal I became very ill with a carbuncle. At that time the I.M.D. doctor was away on leave, and I was attended by an Indian doctor babu. He was kind and most attentive, and gave me confidence. To reach a specialist I should have had to make a four-day journey over the mountains, and then by train to Calcutta through the terrible hot Indian weather. I was in no fit state to attempt that!

Another difficulty was the absence of a European dentist. Once I had violent toothache and so inquired from our Head Clerk if there was any dentist in Nepal who would be able to help me. He told me of a man in the bazaar, so I went off in our car to his surgery, a small room directly facing the street. The front of the room was made

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entirely of glass and the dentist's chair faced the window. To my horror I saw a large crowd collecting outside the window, who watched the proceedings with enormous interest. When I came out of the house several hundred people had collected, and I had difficulty in reaching my car. The crowd had had a fine show free of cost! My *ayah* was quite shocked when I told her about it; she said I ought never to have gone to see the dentist, but should have called him to my bungalow.

Servants were another problem. Not that the Nepalese are bad servants; in many ways they are very good. We had a dozen of them, not counting the three from India and two Nepalese orderlies called Krishna and Bir Bahadur, but in their typical happy-go-lucky way they were always getting into trouble. For example, although getting drunk is strictly prohibited and heavily punished in Nepal, two out of our three gardeners got intoxicated at least once a week. Again, although gambling is also strictly prohibited except on certain specified days, we occasionally found surreptitious gambling parties in some out-house or back verandah, and strict orders, threats and punishments had been forgotten a week later.

One of our main problems was amusements and congenial occupation for our spare time. It was a matter of perpetual regret to us that no sort of social contact was allowed with the Nepalese nobility, who are exceedingly charming. We had a fleeting and formal contact with them at the Durbars, of which there were four a year, an occasional cinema show given by His Highness the Maharaja in his palace, the annual cattle show, and a few other Nepalese ceremonies and festivals.

So the little community of three European families was largely thrown back on its own resources. There was an

18-hole golf course five miles from Kathmandu, where we played three or four times a week; it was a good natural course, and gave us much pleasure. There was of course no club or general meeting place—so characteristic of life in Indian stations—no cinema, little or no bridge. While housekeeping and needlework did not appeal to my husband, we were able to enjoy together the pleasures of the garden, in which we spent several afternoons every week. The valley of Nepal has a wonderful climate, very fertile soil, and, with irrigation when necessary, we were able to work miracles. Starting with bare ground, in three years we had a show place!

The trees which we planted in 1941 on three sides along the outer walls were up to 40 feet high by 1946. They included eucalyptus, poplar, persian lilac, grevillea, the bottle-brush tree, beautiful flowering lagerstroemia and jacaranda, while the fruit trees included peach, pear and mulberry. The latter was most precocious; a seedling planted in 1943 produced in the following year not only quantities of fruit but also vigorous seedlings, so that we had the second generation producing fruit in three years! We also had strawberries, asparagus, Cape gooseberries, crown artichokes and every sort of vegetable in abundance.

The flowers were the crowning glory. I think we can claim a world record for hollyhocks. Some of our plants being perennials, and in the second year grew to 14 feet high with many branches—small trees in fact. Starting with six cuttings in 1941, and a packet of seed, by 1944 every room in the house was filled every day for weeks on end with great bowls of prize carnations, without making any impression on the masses flowering in the beds and plots. A few cuttings of honeysuckle and passion-flowers in the same short period swamped walls

and out-houses, the latter producing hundredweights of fruit. Golden cosmos and marigolds ran wild, and in the autumn combined with the cannas, chrysanthemums, salvias and zinnias to form a blazing riot of colour. We had no potting-sheds or hot-houses, and no need for them. The wonderful climate allowed everything to grow in the open, from temperate plants like English primroses and violets to tropical poinsettias, bougainvillæas, and orchids. We turfed some of the garden to make green lawns, and three weeks after laying down the turf stray ponies wandered in to graze on it!

Motoring in Nepal is not much pleasure. The roads are crowded with people who pay not the slightest attention to motor traffic and refuse to get out of the way. It is like driving through a never-ending football crowd of people who are deaf and blind. In addition to people, there are hundreds of cows and bulls, sheep and goats, dogs and hens and ducks. The large dog population of Nepal, having spent all night howling and yelping in the pie-dog's idiotic way, spend all day sleeping in the centre of the roads, where also human babies are often deposited, especially around blind corners.

No, motoring in Nepal is a real nerve strain. The swarming pedestrians are either junglies, who have never seen a car before, and run madly backwards and forwards across the road half a dozen times before deciding which is the safer side, or are completely oblivious of the horn and the approaching car. They leave the driver to pass them as and how he can.

Motoring in Kathmandu at night is, on the contrary, sheer comedy. For some reason there is a permanent curfew in Kathmandu, signalled by the firing of a cannon on the parade ground at any time between 9 and 11 p.m.

After this signal, the military police have orders to allow no pedestrians or motors to move in the streets. We, being Europeans, were exempt from this order. Whenever we went out to dinner at the other end of the town, our return journey along completely empty roads, except police at four points, was somewhat as follows:—

At the first point out jump two policemen and wave their arms wildly. We draw up. They demand to know who we are and where we are going. We tell them: they say we cannot proceed until we have signed the book. My husband asks them to produce the book. One policeman departs. Ten minutes later he returns, saying he cannot find the book, and the two begin to abuse each other violently. Evelyn chips in with his best Nepali, and says he is not going to wait any longer. They reply that he cannot go on until he has signed the book which is lost. We counter-attack by demanding their names and numbers with a threat to report them to their General next morning. This frightens them, and Evelyn takes the opportunity to glide away.

At the next point there is only one policeman, who has no book, never has had a book, knows nothing about books, but has his orders to allow no motors to pass, and we must stay there until the curfew ends at 5 a.m. After a heated argument we proceed on our way. At the third point the policeman has not only a book but also a split reed as a pen, and a bottle of ink. Perhaps I should say a bottle for ink, as the bottle is quite empty. My husband points out the difficulty of signing without ink, but the little policeman is adamant that the book must be signed before we can go on. So Evelyn obliges by signing without ink, and we proceed in peace.

The fourth policeman has a grubby piece of paper in

lieu of a book, and a pencil (with no point) in lieu of pen and ink. My husband again obliges by signing the paper with the pointless pencil, and all is well. No doubt on the morrow the police will be puzzled by the problem of the disappearing signature.

At the end of the monsoon, when the air is crystal-clear and the great Himalayan peaks glitter all day in the sunshine, we sometimes arranged to stay a night or two at a bungalow on a hill to the north-west of Kathmandu, just to relieve the monotony of life. This place is called Kakani, and the bungalow there belongs to His Highness but was lent to the Legation.

The bungalow, situated on a high ridge of 7,000 feet, in my opinion commands one of the finest views in the world. Immediately in front of the house the terrain drops 4,000 feet into a broad and intensively cultivated valley, the terraced rice fields at this time of year being a vivid green. This valley of the Likhu Khola runs westward into the great Trisuli Gandak river about ten miles away. The Gandak breaks through the Himalayan range from Tibet. On the western side the great massif of Ganesh Himal rises 20,000 feet from the valley, a magnificent sight. Although thirty miles away, in the clear air of November every detail of the terrific precipices, hanging glaciers, and ice cliffs is clearly visible.

To the west, again, another break in the Himalayan chain is caused by a second branch of the Gandak, known as the Kali Gandak. This divides two of the most superb mountains in all the Himalayas, the Himalchuli-Manaslu group on the one side, and the Annapura Himal on the other, both rising over 26,000 feet. Turning to the east from Ganesh Himal, Gosainthan, the sacred and highest mountain wholly in Tibet, is just visible, its

peak of over 26,000 feet standing up behind the nearer ranges.

About 60 miles to the north-east is Gaurishankar, which has sometimes been mistaken for Everest. Nearly 30 miles beyond, the summit of Everest itself can be seen. Like Gosainthan, it towers over the nearer ranges, although not a very conspicuous object in the general landscape.

From Everest to Annapura Himal is 150 miles of snow mountains, which include four peaks of over 26,000 feet. In the whole range only Everest and Annapura Himal have been approached, as access to all the others was impossible by order of the Nepal Government.

We made several visits to Kakani, and were usually lucky in having perfect weather and a superb view. We would sit for hours gazing at the mountains; I think they looked most beautiful at sunset when they glowed a wonderful shade of pink.

In Kathmandu we saw some curious cases of spiritualistic control which interested my husband a great deal. Some Nepalis have to do periodic *pūja* to their *bhagwan* or spirit. If they fail to do this at the right time, the *bhagwan* comes, wherever they may be, and possesses them. They lose consciousness, dance and shout, and behave madly while under control.

The form of *pūja* is as follows:—a number of goats are killed one by one (decapitated with a *kukri*) in the presence of one or two hundred friends, relations and villagers. As each goat is killed, the neck is placed to the mouth of the possessed man, who drinks the blood; in this way some of the blood of five, ten, twenty or even thirty goats may be tasted at a sitting, and after a time the *bhagwan* departs and the man recovers consciousness.

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This performance has to be repeated every two, three, or five years.

In the case of our orderly Krishna Bahadur, when the time came, he did not go to his home for the ceremony. Instead he was suddenly possessed at eight o'clock at night in our compound. I went out and heard him making weird noises and raving. At nine o'clock the seizure passed, and our other orderly said he must be taken to his home at once, or the *bhagwan* would keep seizing him all night. Our bearer, Azmat, went to help him home.

At about ten o'clock Krishna was again under control for half an hour, and they had great difficulty in getting him to his home 8 miles away. When they finally arrived there about one in the morning, an uncle of Krishna's was possessed by his own *bhagwan*, and the two *bhagwans* had a tremendous fight for over an hour through the bodies of Krishna and his uncle. They circled round, and wrestled and hit each other on the head several times with heavy metal bells, causing considerable wounds, and their clothing was all soaked with blood; some men tried to stop the fight, but they were hurled aside like flies.

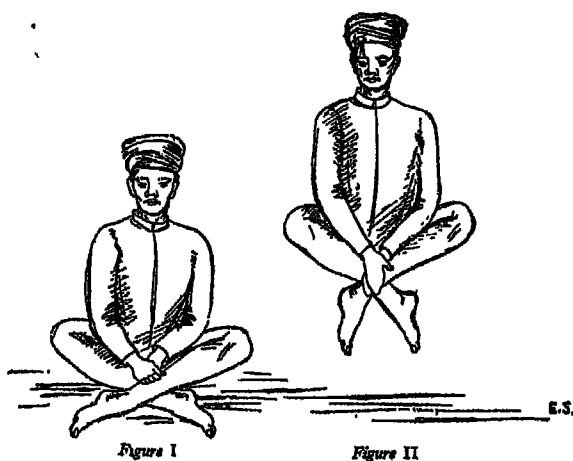
After about an hour of this the *bhagwans* left, and immediately both men became conscious and, according to Azmat, the head wounds and blood on their clothes vanished, and they had no pain or headache! (As we did not see this ourselves we cannot vouch for his correctness). Later, about six in the morning, Krishna's *bhagwan* came back and the family and villagers proceeded with the sacrifice or *pūja*. There were five goats and he drank some of the blood of them all.

Apparently the *bhagwans* have to take large quantities of nourishment at long intervals, and they become very

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peevisish if arrangements are not ready when the time comes! While under the control of his spirit a man's eyes are either shut, or large and redly luminous, and his body jumps up and down, often very stiffly.

A month or two later our other orderly, also called Krishna, was similarly possessed by a *bhagwan*, and Evelyn saw for himself at first-hand what happened. When the



attack began, Azmat came and told my husband, who went out to the servants' quarters where the orderly was. He was squatting cross-legged, his hands clasped between his legs, and his head and body were shaking and quivering. He was making the most extraordinary noises. This went on for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, when suddenly (with his legs still crossed and his hands clasped) he rose about two feet in the air. A second or so later he bumped down again hard on the ground. This happened three times—a remarkable case of levitation and, under normal circumstances, a physical impossibility!

One of the Nepalese servants produced a splinter of resinous wood which he lit and placed the burning end in Krishna's mouth for a minute or two. The seizure continued unaltered, and then suddenly passed, so that Krishna opened his eyes and relaxed. He sat looking dazed but otherwise normal. My husband is quite convinced there was no fake: the whole thing was unpremeditated and unexpected, with the orderly an unwilling medium of these psychic manifestations.

It is said that a *bhagwan* regards the person he takes charge of as his own property, and never leaves him until death. Usually he exerts a beneficial influence, but at times, when he is angry or annoyed, he takes violent control, as exemplified above.

I wish I knew something about spiritualism, which might throw light on these extraordinary actions and results. For a detailed account of this extraordinary case see the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, June, 1951 (Volume XXXVI, No. 664). The illustration on page 165 is reproduced from that Journal by the kind permission of the Editor.

During our years in Nepal we had no particular adventures in Kathmandu, but in August, 1942, when my husband went off on a short visit to Calcutta, he had one of the most unpleasant experiences, and one of the greatest dangers, of his life.

On August 8th the Congress party in India had passed a resolution of open rebellion against the Government, and on the 11th Gandhi and other leaders were arrested and shut up. Immediately there were riots all over India, but nowhere were they so bad as in Bihar, the province bordering Eastern Nepal.

My husband went down to Calcutta on business on the

6th August and returned to Raxaul on the 12th. As he journeyed in his saloon through Bihar, the crowds at the stations became more and more hostile. Men lay in front of the engine and refused to let the train proceed. The guard was helpless, and no police were to be seen. The telegraph lines had been cut, and the train travelled without signals—when the mob allowed it to proceed. As the day wore on, things grew worse.

In one station my husband's saloon was attacked by a mob of a thousand men who hurled stones and tried to smash in the doors, shouting "*Maro, maro*" (kill, kill). Evelyn was like a rat in a trap. He had no weapons of any sort, and in any case they would have been of little use against such a crowd. Another train came into the station, and the mob left my husband's saloon to attack that. We heard afterwards that they seized an Anglo-Indian who was on the train, stripped him of all his clothes, and then burned him alive. So my husband escaped a terrible death!

When his train reached Raxaul it was dark (the train was four hours late, and was the last to run for weeks); the saloon was attached to the end of the train, and as it drew up he jumped out quickly on to the line. In the distance he heard the roar of the oncoming mob. He made off in the darkness, only just in time. A huge crowd attacked the saloon and forced its way in. Azmat behaved very pluckily. He said that the Sahib was not travelling, but was arriving next day. Men searched the saloon for my husband, looking under the seats and in the bath, again shouting "*Maro, maro.*" When they could not find him, they began to seize the luggage, ready to throw it all into a pond, but the Legation Overseer, an Indian, arrived on the scene and managed to stop them.

Bill (on leave from Burma) and I were waiting for Evelyn in the Legation bungalow half a mile from the station. He had told us to wait for him in the station restaurant, but providentially we had not done so. I was very worried when the train did not turn up, for I had heard rumours of riots all over the country. When my husband eventually did arrive he looked quite ill and shaken after the terrible ordeal he had sustained through the entire day.

Bill and I had arranged to go to Kashmir, and had intended to travel in Evelyn's saloon as far as Lucknow, but he said we could not possibly go, that we must return to Nepal. I was very reluctant to abandon our proposed journey, but Bill added the weight of his argument to that of his father and so I had to give in. We learned afterwards that we could not have got through had we tried. The lines were torn up, the telegraph wires cut, and if we had not been killed we should certainly have been held up for some weeks in a small place, unable to move in any direction. Trees had been felled and placed across the roads, and bands of rebels guarded them so that road as well as rail traffic was paralysed.

We slept that night in the verandah of the Legation bungalow. It was terribly hot. We had one 16-bore gun and 100 cartridges, which we kept near to hand. We thought it possible that the mob might attack us in the night. I did not sleep much, and thought several times that I heard footsteps in the bushes. We heard later that the rioters had meant to attack us in the bungalow, but had been told that we had already left for Nepal.

We sent a messenger in to Nepal to ask the manager of the Nepal Railway to stop the train on the frontier next day, for we could not possibly go to the station, which is

in India. He did this, and we were indeed thankful to be in Nepal once more!

Chaos reigned in north Bihar for five weeks. In Kathmandu we were completely cut off from the outside world. We had no post, nor could we post any letters, for weeks, and the telegraph line remained cut.

Several Europeans were brutally murdered. Two R.A.F. officers were attacked in the train. They scrambled out of their carriage to try and quell the mob, but were immediately stabbed in the back and killed. An aeroplane that had to make a forced landing in the vicinity was also attacked and the entire crew murdered.

A missionary who lived near Raxaul had to fly for his life. When his bungalow was attacked he hid in the crops for two days without food and water. He was found by a Mohammedan, who took him to his home at night and hid him there. The missionary dressed up in a woman's clothes, putting a *burkha* over his head. (These head-dresses are worn by *purdah* women, and are made of opaque stuff with two slits cut for the eyes. They cover the whole body completely). For a few days the missionary lived in constant fear of betrayal, but at last the Mohammedan procured a cart and two bullocks, and they set off for the nearest town. They passed bands of rioters on the road but fortunately were asked no questions, and the missionary at last reached safety at Motihari.

Raxaul was occupied by the mob, who seized the post office, police station, and the railway station. They hoisted the Congress flag on the Legation bungalow. We heard all sorts of rumours in Kathmandu. One was that American troops were marching up the line repairing it as they went. The troops, however, turned out to be British.

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Progress was slow, because no sooner had they laid the line than it was pulled up again behind them. It was weeks before trains were able to run; months before they ran normally day and night, and even then troops had to guard every train.

In Kathmandu all was peace and quietness. The trouble might have been in another world, except for the fact that we had no post, no news of any sort except that given over the wireless. And that, for reasons of security, made little mention of the troubles in India.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Temples, Pagodas and Peoples of Nepal

THE Valley of Nepal is 15 miles in length and 13 in breadth, and was undoubtedly originally a lake. Within this small area stand nearly all the principal temples of Nepal, and the temples are the chief glories of the country. On their walls are to be found some of the most wonderful examples of handicraft of bygone ages, carved by pious monarchs whose chief ambition seems to have been to leave behind them undying testimony to the burning devotion in their hearts.

Of all the Buddhist temples, the oldest, finest, and most perfect specimen is Swayambhunath, on top of a small hill near Kathmandu. Its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity; one legend suggests it was pre-Asoka. The chaitya, which forms the main structure of the temple, is composed of a solid hemisphere of brick and earth, supporting a lofty conical spine the top of which is capped by a pinnacle of copper-gilt, and on the four sides of the base are painted, very realistically, the two eyes of Buddha. According to the belief of Newars, as far as these eyes can see the land may never be ploughed with oxen, but may only be dug by hand.

As an instance of the curious blending of Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal, Northey has noted the interesting fact that situated in the very cloisters of Swayambhunath there is a purely Hindu temple, dedicated to the goddess Devi Sitla (the goddess of smallpox), which was built by the Buddhists, and a visit to it is part of the ceremonial

attendant upon a visit to this famous place of Buddhist pilgrimage.

Other Buddhist temples and relics include the very similar temple of Bodnath and the five stupas of Asoka erected in and around the city of Patan.

There are other examples in Nepal where Hindu shrines have been erected within the precincts of Buddhist temples, which are decorated with Hindu gods and Hindu symbols. While the national religion of the Newars was originally Buddhism, about half are now followers of Hinduism, and the influence and spread of Hinduism is steadily and surely pushing back Buddhism to the higher mountain ranges adjoining Tibet.

Of the sacred Hindu temples and places of pilgrimage in Nepal, which are legion, only the most important can be mentioned here. The most sacred of all the Hindu temples to the followers of Shiva is Shree Pashupatinath, where annually pilgrims from all over India assemble in thousands during a particular fortnight.

Brown in *Picturesque Nepal* has described it as follows:—
 "Pashupati is a picturesque collection of temples and shrines, about three miles north-east of Kathmandu, on the banks of the Bagmati river. Here, this stream passes through a narrow gorge, which may be appropriately called 'the valley of shadow', for Pashupati is truly the doorway of death. So holy is this place that the one great desire of the Hindu is to gasp out his last breath on the steps of the ghat, with his feet lapped by the swirls and eddies of the sacred stream. And so they die, tortured perhaps in body but happy in mind because they have been spared to die within the holy precincts of Pashupati. And in the gloaming one may see the turrets and gilded roofs lit up by the glow of the funeral pyres of the dead."

Pashupatinath is one of the twelve most sacred Lingams of India, and ranks with Rameswaram of Madras, Kedarnath of the United Provinces, Visweswarnath of Benares and the others.

To appreciate the religious atmosphere of Nepal and of the Valley in particular, one must realise that there are scores and scores of temples and shrines tucked away down alleyways in the towns, by roadsides, or in the forests. Over the country there hangs, as it were, a pall of fervent religion which is intensified by the enthusiasm of the people in observing the endless succession of religious festivals, and strengthened by the deeply religious attitude of the Maharaja himself.

Just as almost every situation is sanctified by its altar or shrine, so almost every day of the year is marked by its religious ceremony or festival. Many are mere local observances associated with a village saint or a minor divinity. The Nepalis love displays of dancing, music and general hilarity, which are considered an indispensable ingredient of Hindu festivals, and are indulged in with the greatest enthusiasm.

There are a number of great national festivals peculiar to Nepal, besides several others which differ little from those practised in India. Of the purely indigenous festivals, the most important is that in honour of Machhendranath, the patron saint of Nepal. The story goes that this saint Machhendranath will one day return to Nepal and usher in the millennium. He will be recognised by establishing his claim to a small shirt, which he wore in his first life, and which has been carefully preserved during the centuries that have since elapsed.

So, on the appointed day, in the presence of the nobility and many thousands of the people, the Maharaja

mounts on a gigantic wooden car with solid wooden wheels 8 feet in diameter, a shaft composed of a whole tree, and towering up 40 feet or more in height, and which has taken several hundred men a whole month to drag about 3 miles. Having mounted to a sort of balcony well above the level of the crowd, he walks solemnly round, holding up to the general view a small dark vest or shirt, which would only fit a small child, so that if Machhendranath has returned to earth during the past twelve months he can claim it and establish his claim by performing some miracle. This, no doubt, chokes off possible impostors. At any rate this fascinating ceremony has been carried out for many centuries, and no one has ever made a claim.

All writers about Nepal have been impressed by the extraordinary variety of races, tribes and languages in Nepal. Professor Turner has written this about it:—"To the western European nothing could be more astonishing than the diversity of races and languages which he would find in Nepal. In a population of about six millions in all, there are spoken at least a score, if not indeed a still greater number, of languages all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects. Even within the limits of a single valley there may be, and often is, a village the inhabitants of which speak a language completely unintelligible to their neighbours in the next village a mile away."

The origin of this diversity is to be found in the various migrations which have brought the present population into the country.

The earliest or aboriginal inhabitants of the country were Dravidian or Austro-Asiatic, whose dialect is still surviving in the plateau of Chota Nagpur and amongst

ances on the southern slopes of the Himalayas and the Terai, including Nepal. But these primitive races have been overlaid and enslaved by two waves of invasion, by Mongolians from the north and by the Aryans from the south and west, and have largely disappeared now.

The two main branches of the population of Nepal are thus:—

(1) Mongolian, and (2) Indo-Aryan.

While the Aryan invaders of India were pouring into India from Iran through the north-western passes somewhere in the second millennium B.C., the Mongolian emigrants were pouring in from Tibet through the northern passes, and, roughly speaking, the latter occupied the northern central and eastern tracts of Nepal, while the former found themselves in the western and southern tracts.

At a much later date there was a further invasion which has had a predominant influence on present-day Nepal. As a result of the Moghul invasions, a number of high-caste Thakurs and Rajputs, driven out of Rajputana and Central India, took refuge in the Himalayas, and from these immigrants have descended the present rulers and nobility of Nepal. Thus the family of the Maharaja traces descent back to the Rana family of Udaipur.

This invasion, if tradition can be believed, had another and more humble influence on the population of Nepal. The malarious and deadly Terai is inhabited by a race called the Tharus, who are practically immune to malaria. Northey has given the following story of their origin:—

"The Terai was originally inhabited by a race of wild men (aboriginals) who knew not the meaning of law and order. Sometime during the twelfth century when the

Rajputs were about to be besieged in Chitor, they sent their womenfolk to take refuge in the lower hills of Nepal. Later on, when Chitor had fallen and most of its garrison had been slaughtered, the Rajput women, who until then had held aloof from the local inhabitants, began to take husbands from amongst the inhabitants of the Terai, and their offspring were the original Tharus."

It is interesting to note that even today the Tharu women, who are known as *Ranis* (queens), are considered to be the leaders of the race.

Tharus occupy the key position of *mahawats* and attendants of the elephants of Nepal, and their pluck and skill is a predominant factor in the success of all big-game shooting in the Terai.

Turning to the inhabitants of Mongolian origin, which supply all the recruits for the Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army, the principal tribes or races are the Gurungs and Magars of Central Nepal, and the Rais and Limbus of Eastern Nepal.

Although these four tribes supply the bulk of the recruits for the 20 battalions of Gurkha regiments, historically and geographically only the Gurungs and Magars can claim to be the original Gorkhali or Gurkhas. Two centuries ago Gurkha was a petty kingdom in the Gurung country with a small hill village called Gurkha as capital. In 1742 Prithwi Narayan Shah became king of this village and surrounding country, but before he died in 1775 he had conquered the valley of Nepal itself, and consolidated his power and expanded his kingdom over the Kirantis in the east, to the passes of Tibet on the north, to the Terai in the south and far to the west, thus becoming the first King of Nepal.

TEMPLES, PAGODAS AND PEOPLES OF NEPAL

There is one more important race to describe, the Newars of the valley of Nepal. Their origin has been a matter of considerable speculation; it seems probable that they have been the inhabitants of the Nepal valley before the spread of Buddhism and probably migrated from the north.

These people have a curious custom of marrying a girl to a Bel fruit, which is hard and indestructible, about the size of an apple, and the fruit of a small common jungle tree. She can take a human husband, but should he die she would not be a widow, as her real husband is the bel, which never dies. As widows have such a sad life this seems a good idea.

Dr. Oldfield, writing many years ago about Buddhism in Nepal, records a legend which, if true, suggests a possible origin of the Newars:—"Having travelled through the greater part of north-east India, Buddha made a pilgrimage to Nepal, accompanied by 1,350 mendicant ascetics, and having with him the Raja of Benares with his Minister of State and an immense crowd of all sorts and conditions. In Nepal he found that the doctrines of which he was the apostle had already taken firm root. They had been introduced into the country by a distinguished teacher from Tibet named Manjusari, who had led the first colony from China into Nepal and built a temple to the eternal self-existent spirit Swayambhu . . . When Buddha returned to Hindustan, most of the followers who had accompanied him—being charmed with the beauties of the sacred valley—settled in Nepal and became gradually blended by intermarriage with the earlier inhabitants of the country."

The buildings and the most characteristic types of Nepalese temples are in the so-called pagoda style.

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Professor Levi thinks it not improbable that the pagoda style was in existence in Nepal long before it made its appearance farther east, and suggests that the pagodas of China and elsewhere are due to the influence of the Newars, who were employed as skilled workmen (up to quite modern times) in Tibet, Tartary, and many other parts of China.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Touring in the Nepal Terai (1941-43)

I MENTIONED earlier that we spent four months every year on tour in the Terai jungles. During our stay in Nepal we covered most of the 500 miles from one end of the country to the other, frequently—in fact usually—visiting places where no European woman or man had ever been.

On tour we took two tents for ourselves; a small Swiss cottage for bedroom, and a single-fly pal for dining-room; and small tents called *shuldaris* for our servants.

The party at full-strength numbered 40 persons:—

My husband and I.

Five private servants.

Head Assistant and 3 clerks.

Four servants for clerks.

Three orderlies.

Three tent-pitchers.

Seven sepoys.

Twelve elephant men.

We could procure rice, eggs and chickens, excellent buffalo milk from the local villages, and we made our own bread and butter. Everything else had to be carried with us. The water was often bad, but we had a small portable still in which all drinking water was purified. We used petromax lamps, but owing to the frequent breakages of mantles and chimneys we had to carry a large number of spares.

Camping arrangements in Nepal were in some ways very different from those which existed in India. It must be realised that slavery was abolished only 20 years previously, and the slave mentality is still prevalent. Throughout Nepal unpaid labour is universally available for preparing camping sites, supplying fire-wood and water, repairing the roads and cart-tracks that exist, and providing cart transport, although a nominal sum of a few annas is paid for the latter.

Whenever the local officials took the trouble, camp arrangements were very good. Local sepoy went on in advance to select and prepare the next camping site. Sometimes they went to the wrong place, sometimes they went to sleep; often we found nothing ready when we arrived. What was worse, our guide occasionally took us to one point of the compass, while the guides with the carts took them to another. On one march, the first of the carts did not make contact with us until after 10 at night, and we slept under the twinkling stars.

Postal arrangements were not particularly reliable. We often found ourselves 50 to 60 miles from a railhead or a post office. Then our mail came out by sepoy or runners. Sometimes it reached us regularly and with comparative speed, sometimes it went astray for two or three weeks, occasionally it never reached us at all.

Our touring in Nepal territory was not continuous. When we had toured through one or two adjoining districts, we usually had to jump 150 or 200 miles to some other district. The quickest way of progress was to cross the frontier and travel on Indian railways. This was sometimes quite a business. In India, as in the rest of the world in the war years, the railways were struggling with great difficulties. Moreover, we required a whole wagon

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for our camp-kit and tents, 18 or 20 seats for the camp servants and staff, and a reserved carriage or saloon for ourselves. As my husband was busy organising the extraction of hundreds of thousands of railway sleepers for urgent military demands, the railway authorities were extremely good to us, but even "the best-laid plans of mice and men . . .", and there were occasions when arrangements went wrong. For instance:—

A railway runs in north Bihar parallel with the Nepal frontier. Jogbani is just outside Nepal in the east, with Raxaul about 200 miles away in the west. The journey, which should have been quite comfortable, turned out to be a sheer nightmare.

First of all the saloon the traffic manager had kindly provided for us was sent off empty on the wrong train. This saloon would have been attached to the various trains by which we had to travel, thereby saving us a change at four in the morning and a wait of three hours on the platform, not to mention two other subsequent changes.

As it was we found it difficult even to get on to our first train. The Japanese had been bombing Calcutta, and thousands of Indians of all classes were fleeing from that city. Some walked, others went on any train so long as they could get away from the danger. We heard that some rich Indians paid 100 rupees in addition to the railway fare in order to procure seats. The poor people went without tickets, so that the third-class carriages were a solid mass of humanity. One of my husband's contractors bribed the guard, who cleared a first-class carriage for us, and commandeered a few seats in a third-class to accommodate our numerous camp followers, who spent the night sitting on each others' laps.

The fun began again at 4 a.m. when we had to change.

There were two first-class carriages, both full of coolies. My husband summoned an official to clear the carriages, but he was afraid to do anything because there had been a riot earlier in the day and no police were available. Evelyn therefore attacked the carriages with our orderlies and sepoy, armed with kukris. Thirty-two coolies were evicted from one first-class carriage, 27 from another. None of them had travel tickets.

Another great difficulty on this journey was the shortage of small change. The price of copper and silver had risen beyond the value of copper and silver coins, so that the lower denominations of money had vanished. We had to use postage stamps for coins, which soon became so grubby that they were of no value to anyone.

Superficially the submontane forests of Nepal are very similar to the adjoining sal forests of the United Provinces in which we had spent so many years. There are the same types of vegetation and species of trees, the same division into swampy Terai, dry Bhabar, and foothills, and much the same climate. But to the trained eye of a Forest officer the similarity was only superficial. After 70 years of scientific management in the U.P., the old, crooked and decayed trees have largely vanished, replaced by millions of well-grown poles. Creepers and climbers have also largely disappeared. The Nepal forests give a very good picture of what the U.P. forest must have been 70 years ago, with occasionally a magnificent tree dotted amongst vast numbers of valueless specimens choked with gigantic climbers.

This was to be expected. What we did not expect was the remarkable contrast in the wild animal life of the two districts. In the Chitawan game and rhino sanctuary, where there is a large staff of sepoy specially appointed

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for prevention of poaching and the task of game protection, there is still a fair stock of rhino, tigers, elephants, deer, peafowl, etc. But throughout the rest of Nepal every sort of wild animal (except leopards and junglefowls) seemed almost extinct! The Nepalis, of course, are passionately fond of *shikar* and of meat. A wild pig, for example, which we never thought of shooting in the U.P., ranks far above a mere leopard. And as in practice, whatever there may be on paper, there is no game protection, the virtual extinction of wild animals is inevitable.

For me this was particularly disappointing, for my favourite amusement in camp, *ghooming* quietly on an elephant in the evening, was out of the question. There is little fun *ghooming* when one knows beforehand that the chances of seeing or hearing anything in the nature of a wild animal are negligible. The very occasional deer I saw once in a blue moon were as wild as hawks. They were off at full speed long before I could see whether there was a shootable stag amongst them.

After the first month or so my husband never took out a rifle at all during his morning forest inspections. He did not, in fact, fire 20 rifle cartridges throughout the whole of our stay in Nepal.

Fishing, except in the biggest rivers, was equally disappointing. Netting, fish-traps, poison, and every conceivable form of fish destruction was so largely employed that few or no fish over two inches long survive.

Bereft though we were of the pleasure of shooting and fishing, we had ample compensation in the really magnificent scenery, in exploring wild places, and in seeing primitive tribes and their customs and habits of life.

Our first tour was in Morung in Eastern Nepal. We travelled from Raxaul to Jogbani by train, and thence by

lorry to our camp just outside the town of Biratnager—the largest industrial town in Nepal, and the proud possessor of an up-to-date jute mill.

Our camp was situated on the bank of a sluggish Terai stream under trees which provided plenty of shade. We had a wonderful view of Makalu (27,600 feet), which hid all except the peak of Everest. Kanchenjunga was visible in the east.

One day in camp is generally much like another. My husband went out into the forest while I sat in the shade of a tree most of the day. In the evenings we talked by an enormous camp fire made up of whole branches of trees and huge logs. We moved camp every two or three days.

Travelling northwards about 25 miles from one camp, we actually came upon a motor road. Two lorries carried our kit and servants, and we went in a motor-car of very ancient date. A fair was being held in one small village we passed through. We had wondered why we had seen so many villagers in the vicinity carrying some produce for sale, such as bundles of jute, a basket of rice, mats made of grass, and baskets. We walked through the booths followed by an enormous crowd, many of whom could never have seen a European woman before, and perhaps not even a European man. Many different tribes were represented here: Nimbus, Dhimals, Bhotis—all wild savage tribes but looking quite peaceful and happy that day.

We pitched our camp on the bank of a small river. It was a nice spot but rather damp. The first evening we saw a leech, fully 3 inches long, looping its way up the tent roof. We caught it and threw it into the camp fire. I had visions of hosts of leeches crawling into my bed and

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sucking me dry during the night. This once happened to a Forest guard who went to sleep in a leech-infested jungle. We had only just cremated the leech when a huge hairy caterpillar, one of those with poisonous hairs, appeared. This followed the leech into the fire, and we wondered what would turn up next. Not a snake, we hoped. The forests all round the camp are said to be the home of many pythons, but these great reptiles are generally harmless.

Ants are always a plague in camp and I waged constant war against them.

At dinner that night, my husband said: "What are these black things in my pudding?" On closer inspection they proved to be ants, many of them. I had already eaten my pudding and stewed fruit, so I must have consumed dozens of them. Not a pleasing thought!

Our next move was to a camp 11 miles away. The arrangements for our transport broke down, for the promised carts did not materialise. After waiting several hours we sent our orderlies to the nearest village, and they promptly seized enough carts for our need.

The last part of our journey was across rice fields, through which a path had been cut for our passage between the standing crop. We had our lunch in the forest under a bilour tree. These trees have enormous leaves about two feet long, and a small acorn-like fruit which is used as a dye. The fruit was ripe and some was lying about on the ground. My husband accidentally sat on one, which acted on his skin like an acid. He soon had three big blisters which were very painful and caused him much trouble for several days afterwards.

We made our camp in a clearing in the sal forest near a river. Hereabouts I saw some wonderful orchid plants,

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and tried to procure a few roots to send to Kathmandu for our garden. When we pulled at one, however, the whole orchid plant came away from the tree, and the two orderlies carried it home on a pole. It weighed 20 lbs. at least.

One day villagers up-stream put some poison, made of fruit berries, in the river. This affected the fish in such a way that they became almost moribund though they did not actually die. They came down-stream near the surface, turning over and over. The men of the village and also some women were in the water catching the fish in their hands as they passed. The fish were mere sprats, a few inches long, but there were hundreds of them.

Our servants all joined in the sport (*sic*) and spent a merry afternoon dashing about in the water. The *gyah* was there with her skirts tucked well up over her knees. The fish were placed in buckets, dusters and hats, and enough caught to make a good meal. The fish are eaten whole like whitebait. I was horrified to see such wholesale destruction of fish.

One evening I paid a visit to the elephant camp and watched the *mahawats* preparing a meal for their charges. In the U.P. the elephants are taken out every day into the forests, where the men in charge cut food (the small branches of suitable trees) for the elephants to carry back and eat at their leisure. They are also given 20 lbs. of coarse flour a day, and a quantity of sugar. In Nepal, when the rice is ripe, the elephants are fed on it. It is prepared for them by the *mahawat*, making, as it were, parcels of rice, and using the rice stalks for wrapping up the grain—a feat which he did very neatly. Each elephant had 30 lbs. of grain in addition to vast quantities of grass.

The *mahawats* are poorly paid, receiving five rupees a

month, plus keep. As the elephant is the symbol of the god Ganesh, and so cannot be insulted by beating, high-caste Hindus cannot be *mahawats*. Mohammedans are few, so that all *mahawats* in Nepal are Tharus.

At our next camp there were some gigantic semal trees, bare of leaves at this time of the year. On one tree, 120 feet high, we counted 40 bee-hives hanging from its massive branches. These hives, resembling enormous plates cut in half, are suspended from the lower side of the branches, and are a mass of living bees. The morning after our arrival some men came to take the honey from the combs. We found it very interesting watching the procedure.

There were four men dressed completely in sacking, faces covered except for eye-slits. They carried a bamboo pole about 35 feet long, some rope, bundles of rags, green leaves for making smoke, and some empty tins. The rags and green leaves were tied into long sausage-shaped bundles and set alight, then, armed with this smoke-screen, two men climbed the tree. This they did by fixing the bamboo firmly into a fork of the tree and climbing up the pole. They then threw the rope, to which an iron hook was attached, over a high branch, and lowered it till they could catch it again, thus making a double line up which they could climb to the higher branches.

On reaching a bee-hive they lowered a rope to the men below, who tied to it an empty tin. This was then hoisted, a smoking bundle held near the hive, and the stupefied bees brushed off the comb. The parts with the most honey were cut off with a sickle and put in the tin, which was then lowered.

It was a cold misty morning when the operations started, and the bees were quiescent; but as the sun rose

higher and more and more bees were disturbed, a continuous roar of wings could clearly be heard from our camp. Our sweeper, venturing too near, was stung on the ear, but no one else was attacked. The bees, apparently, were not very vicious. My husband was able to venture near enough to take photographs. The roar of the bees went on for several hours after the honey collectors had left, and numbers of bees buzzed round the camp looking for their lost honey. We bought some of the comb and, after we had strained it, the honey was delicious.

One day at this camp I noticed many vultures eating something at the edge of the river near the tents, but since such a sight is quite common I did not take particular notice. Later on I saw a dog going off with what I imagined to be a piece of a dead cow or bullock. The servants, however, discovered that the vultures were having a meal off a dead man. The dog had taken off a leg to enjoy on its own. As we were drinking the river water, and the man might have died of cholera, we were distinctly disturbed and cautioned all the servants and camp followers not to drink any water from the river. We distilled all our own supply, even that with which we cleaned our teeth. We made arrangements to get a supply of water from a well about a mile away from the camp.

After a few days we moved on eastwards, but cholera was raging all over the country, and we had to cut short our tour. On one march one of our orderlies was taken violently ill soon after eating some sweetmeats from a village shop. In ten hours he died of cholera by the bank of a river. There was nothing we could do to help him. We marched on with all our camp to a hospital 30 miles away, where we were all inoculated.

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The Hindus burn their dead by a river, but in epidemics such as cholera, plague, or influenza the bodies are thrown into the river unburned, and eaten by crocodiles, river turtles and fish. Vultures and jackals finish off anything thrown on the banks.

Is it any wonder that there are outbreaks of cholera in India? In 1918 ten million people died of influenza in India. The banks of the rivers were strewn with corpses, and in places the canals were blocked with them.

After this tour I had to leave my husband to go camping alone, and I spent the next two months in Rangoon with Bill, whose book *Birds of Burma* had just been published.

After spending eight months in Kathmandu, our next tour took us through Eastern Nepal in the jungle south of Everest. We went east, along the main trunk road through the Nepal Terai cultivated area—a rough track only just possible for carts. It runs along an embankment breached in many places by floods, and the bridges over the numerous streams were all broken down, so that the carts had to descend from the embankment as best they could, ford the rivers, and climb up again on the further side.

We collected some coolies who went along with the carts mending the road as they went.

We pitched our tents by a Terai stream, the water of which was fairly good. The view from the camp was magnificent: we could see Makalu and Chamlang with Everest showing up behind, and Kanchenjunga visible away in the east.

There were many birds by the river. I watched an Indian pied kingfisher diving, and in the evening flights of beautiful white egrets made their way down-stream.

In the early morning, while our tents were packed up,

we had breakfast outside in the sun. The mist was rising from the water like steam, and the snows looked ethereal in the dim distance.

This day the road was very bad. We did not see how our carts could ever get along. But they came through, only two being overturned. We saw several human skulls and whole skeletons lying by the wayside—victims of the cholera epidemic in this district the previous year.

As we had not yet reached the sal forest my husband wanted to inspect, we marched again the next day. I walked four or five miles and then climbed on to an elephant. As we were going through a village a very small kid ran playfully up to our elephant. Instantly there was an uproar. The elephant trumpeted and began to dance about, whereupon the kid ran between the trunk and the feet of the second elephant, who turned round like a tectotum, squealing and roaring and nearly hurling our Head Assistant to the ground. All four elephants were trembling with fright and making a great hubbub. The *mahawats* were yelling for someone to catch the kid, which gambolled around the elephant's legs quite happily, quite unafraid. A man ran out from a hut nearby and caught the kid, but it escaped and came charging at the four elephants again. They fled in panic. We had visions of being thrown to the ground, but the kid was at last caught and subdued.

Our havildar, whose job it was to put up our tents and make our camp fires, was a great character. Every evening he came to talk with us as we sat by the blaze he had created for us. He had a rugged, kindly face. He wore a woolly scarf wrapped round his head turban-fashion, a ragged waistcoat and trousers of coarse white material, narrow at the ankles like jodhpurs. Round his waist he

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wound a white cloth into which he stuck a kukri. He was paid seven rupees a month, but he was quite content and told us that he had seven cows at home and a little land, also several small children. We augmented his pay by a few rupees, for which he was very grateful.

Chiri, our Newar butler, was also a character. He was short, with a round cheerful face, an illuminating smile and a great sense of humour. He appeared to be very timid and, not having had any previous experience of forest life, his leg was constantly being pulled by the other servants, who pretended there were tigers and leopards in every patch of grass. One day he came to me with a long face, complaining that chickens were very expensive in the village. I inquired the price and he said they were six annas each (sixpence)! We had ten eggs a day, one or two chickens according to size, and six pints of milk, all for about one shilling and sixpence.

Our next march was due north towards the hills, with Kanchenjunga towering in the distance. On the march we heard the noise of an aeroplane, and were astonished to see a big bomber flying over the forest in a westerly direction. Aeroplanes were forbidden to fly over Nepal, and we wondered if it were a Japanese machine. The difference between this method of progression and ours was very striking, and contrasted twenty centuries of evolution in means of transport.

It is interesting to explain why flying over Nepal is now forbidden. It will be remembered that in 1933 the Lady Houston expedition obtained permission for aeroplanes to fly over Everest, and under the leadership of the Marquess of Clydesdale (now Duke of Hamilton) two planes successfully accomplished the feat, one nearly crashing on the summit during the process. By an un-

fortunate coincidence, a few months later, Nepal was racked and wrecked by a most appalling earthquake. The obvious explanation to the Nepalese people was that the gods who live on the top of Everest were so angry at this intrusion that they caused the earthquake, with its devastating results in loss of human life and ruined cities.

We camped on the edge of the forest, looking out on to rice fields with a village nearby. Some of the inhabitants came to watch us, and the menfolk helped with the tents. Our arrival must have been a great event for them, no Europeans ever having been in these parts before.

The people of this village are Raj-Bhansis, small in stature but sturdy in physique, and wear nothing but a loincloth. They believe profoundly in spirits, both good and bad. There is one evil spirit who travels from village to village bringing misfortune in his train. In order that he may pass quickly by their particular village, small shrines are built near the rivers and roads. Within these shrines are numerous clay models of horses and elephants—free transport to the next village!

We had to cover so much country in the short period that camping is possible in these malarious jungles that there was no time to dally. The next day we moved again. We turned west and went through dense forest interspersed as before with open spaces where the forest had been felled to make way for cultivation. There were many thousands of acres of rice and, although it was ripe, few men were gathering it in. When I reflected that it had all to be cut by hand, I felt quite staggered at the immensity of the task.

Lying by the wayside on the grass we found what at first sight looked like a dead man. We stopped, and were much relieved when he moved and then sat up slowly.

Our Head Assistant questioned him and ascertained that he had come a distance of 70 miles to help harvest the rice crop. He had been taken ill with malaria in a village about two furlongs away, and the villagers, fearing he might die, had turned him out. He had lain down to die without food or water. The Head Assistant left two of our elephant men behind with instructions to stop our carts and put the sick man on one of them and bring him to our camp. This they did and we dosed him with quinine and hoped we might save his life.

At this camp a villager was badly injured by a huge wild buffalo, who lived on the other side of the river. These animals are very rare, almost extinct in Nepal and India. We hoped he might come down to the river at dusk, either to drink or to follow the large herd of cattle home, as he often bred with these tame buffaloes.

We could see a long stretch of river from our camp and kept a sharp look-out with field glasses. It was growing dark when we saw a huge animal come slowly out of the forest, walk through some tall grass, and step down to the water. He paused every few yards to raise his head and sniff the air, as buffaloes do. His immense horns must have measured 9 feet. We watched him till it was too dark to see any more; there was no question of trying to shoot him, for wild buffaloes are strictly preserved in Nepal.

Next day we had to move again, though I should have liked to rest. We found a nice site for our camp, and had lunch beneath a tree, hoping the carts would arrive in good time. After several hours elapsed and there was no sign of them, we realised that something must be wrong.

The Head Assistant dashed off on an elephant, the second assistant galloped off on a pony, and sepoy and havildars went out in all directions to look for the missing carts. They were eventually found three and a half miles away in the wrong direction. This meant that they had to cover seven miles more than they should have done. Everyone was very cross and tired, but I had to smile when I heard my husband using the Nepali swear-words he had spent the whole afternoon in learning.

The sick man came on one of the carts. He showed signs of recovering. Fortunately we had a good supply of quinine and quinacrine, so scarce then, yet absolutely indispensable in these jungles.

I always took elaborate precautions against mosquitoes, wearing double socks in the evening, also wrapping a sheet round my legs and burning sticks of a substance like incense which mosquitoes abominate.

In these forests malignant malaria and black-water fever are prevalent. The worst sort of malaria seems to be the cerebral malaria, the victims of which often die after a few days illness. Another disease to be dreaded in these parts is elephantiasis. It is very common in Nepal and is propagated by the common mosquito.

Our marches now took us westwards. The weather was clear and we had wonderful views of Makalu, but only the very top of Everest was now visible peering over Lhotse. The sick man was so much better that we were able to leave him behind with a friend of his at a small hamlet we passed.

At one place, where my husband had important work to inspect, we were informed that the river had dried up, and that we could not possibly take our large camp there. Evelyn arranged to travel lightly and go alone for one

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night. I must confess that I did not like the isolation—the only European woman for hundreds of miles.

The camp was in the heart of the jungle and a leopard visited it every night. I slept during the darkness with a lamp alight, and a gun lying by my bed ready for any intruder.

Our next camping ground was rather a gruesome place on the bank of an exceedingly dirty river. A little way up-stream a human corpse was lying in the water, and nearby was the carcass of a dead cow. In a ravine just behind our tents was a human skeleton, all complete. The bones were white and shiny. Near the skeleton were the remains of a buffalo, finished recently by vultures (the bones were red and gory), and the skeleton of a dog.

As there was no other place where we could camp, I tried to forget the skeletons, but refused to use the river water even though we could distil it. We sent coolies to fetch water from a well a mile away. When I asked our Head Assistant why dead people were left about like this, he explained that they were probably travellers who had died by the wayside, or perhaps been thrown out to die like the man we had rescued earlier on our tour.

We eventually arrived back at Jogbani having made a circuitous route. From there, our tour ended with a railway journey from Jogbani to Raxaul.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Touring in Western Nepal (1943-44)

IN the autumn of 1943, after spending eight months in Kathmandu, we set off for our winter tour, which this year was to take us through the Terai forests of Western Nepal.

Our first camp at Gauriphanta was very cold and damp, and Evelyn promptly went down with lumbago, and the sweeper with malaria, so I had two invalids on my hands.

Our tents were pitched under a huge haldu tree which my husband estimated was at least 350 years old. In the middle of the night I heard showers (from *langurs*!) descending on the tent from above. I had to get up, put a gun together, and go out and fire two shots into the tree, whereupon the *langurs* moved off. The reports woke the whole camp, the clerks dashing along, thinking we had been attacked by a wild elephant or by robbers. The next morning the havildar made a bucket of Lux and washed down the tent. It sadly needed decontaminating.

Our Nepalese Conservator, an old frail-looking man, was also ill with malaria, so on arrival at the next camp I gave him twelve of our precious quinine pills, no longer procurable and worth their weight in gold, with careful instructions to take three for two days, morning noon, and evening, and then two for three days. Next morning, I said: "I hope you are better, *Subha Sahib*; have you taken any pills?" "I have taken ten," he replied. "Good gracious!" I cried, looking at him anxiously. He had become a vivid shade of yellow, but was much more lively than he had been the day before, so I hoped for the best.

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After a few days all the invalids were well again, and we continued our journey eastwards.

One of our female elephants was a bad old thing; she had a habit of shaking when she was annoyed and anyone on her back was in danger of being thrown off. I heard a great commotion at one camp, and saw this elephant behaving like a bucking broncho. Her *mahawat* had tried to make her sit down, but she objected and hurled herself around, shaking her great shoulders and lurching about in a terrifying manner. The *mahawat* was on her neck and clung on in spite of all her efforts to throw him off. She kept it up for fifteen minutes and then calmed down.

After six or seven marches we came to a fair-sized river, the Kuriala. Fortunately it forked where we wanted to cross, so the carts were able to negotiate it, but only just, for they were all awash. We had arranged boards in the carts to raise our boxes, so most things got over dry.

My husband and I stood on the far bank and watched a party of Tibetans making ready to wade across, jolly-looking folk but incredibly dirty. They told us they had been to Nepal (meaning Kathmandu) to see the sacred temples, and they were now journeying home to Tibet, a two-months' journey, part of which lay up the Sarda gorge, where the path crosses great cliffs and precipices, and over dizzy rope bridges.

Next day we came to a huge river, the Girwa, which rises in far off Tibet. We crossed in a large country boat, which had to make several voyages to ferry over all the camp followers and luggage. We pitched the tents on the high bank by the water's edge and that evening I wandered off on an elephant into the jungle behind our tents. Unexpectedly it proved to contain a variety of

game. Bir Bahadur, who was with me, saw a leopard on a patch of burned grass; it lay flat on the ground and I could not see it. We moved towards it, whereupon it got up and slunk off into some tall grass, allowing no time for a shot. We dashed after it, but when we had gone a hundred yards without finding it we turned back and circled round to the place where we had first seen it. Suddenly I spotted it moving across our front; it stopped and looked at the elephant. I took careful aim, and shot it through the heart, much to the excitement of Bir Bahadur, who had never seen one shot before.

Next morning there was an air battle over the river. A flock of forty or fifty egrets was circling and wheeling on glistening white wings over the water, when suddenly an eagle attacked. The flock kept tight formation and for some time the eagle was unable to break in, but when one bird became separated, the eagle was after it. I watched fascinated, hoping the egret would escape. The eagle dived and missed by a fraction, the egret flew on, the eagle close behind, but gradually the egret out-distanced its pursuer and to my surprise finally escaped.

A large herd of buffaloes approached the river. The herdsmen drove them into the water, and they swam across in a body, all except five who turned back, and had to be escorted by a dugout. I tried to persuade the *mahawats* to let our four elephants swim the river, but they demurred, saying there was a ford further up.

I was sorry to leave this lovely place.

We had our next camp on the bank at a curve of the river from where we could watch it flowing on its leisurely way, winding between banks of golden sand fringed with savannahs of tawny grass. We named this the camp of the peacocks, for we watched forty or fifty

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of these magnificent birds come down to drink in the evening.

On the road we had seen the footprints of a tiger family, tiger, tigress and two cubs, and at night they roared all round our camp. It is a wonderful sound to hear at dead of night, when one is lying snugly in a warm bed, but Chiri did not think so, and quaked with fright.

It may have been the peafowl that cast an evil spell over us, for one of the orderlies became rather seriously ill and had to be sent off in a cart to the nearest railhead, and thence to hospital. There followed a storm that had been threatening. The trenches that had been dug round the tents saved us from being flooded out, but living conditions became miserable; the camp fires went out, it was impossible to keep warm. The cook provided us with excellent meals throughout, but how he managed to do so is a mystery.

When it cleared up we could not march for several days, the tracks being impassable, and the tents too wet and heavy to carry.

Every afternoon, having nothing else to do, I wandered in the jungle on an elephant; usually the clerks and Head Assistant accompanied me. There was very little game, but one day we saw a pangolin, or scaly ant-eater, a rare animal, which I had never seen before in the forest. It had been busy demolishing a huge ant-castle, and crept under it as we approached. I could see about one foot of its tail, into which I fired a number 6 cartridge. The tail remained where it was, so I thought I had killed the animal. The elephants began careering about, so we all got off, and I approached the ant-castle on foot with my .256, the four or five clerks, havildar, etc., crowding behind. We could see the tail, so I fired a shot into it at very close

range. The tail still moved so I fired another number 6 into it, and was surprised to see the crowd behind me fall to the ground. Two bespectacled clerks collapsed together in a heap, one yelling that he had been hit near the eye; it appeared that the shot, including the rifle bullet, were ricocheting off this most peculiar animal, and it was most fortunate that no one had been injured.

As gun and high-velocity rifle appeared useless, and more dangerous to the spectators than to the target, we sent back for a spade with which to dig it out. We succeeded after a considerable amount of trouble, the pangolin having curled itself up under the stump of a tree. The crowd worked in turns, poking and pulling at the animal.

We marched on eastwards to the old market town of Nepalgunj where the hill people come to trade in the big bazaar. I was fascinated by the brass in the shops, where piles of brass cooking-pots and utensils of all sorts were displayed for sale.

From Nepalgunj we marched on to the Rapti river. Our Head Assistant usually found us pleasant camp sites, but this time had not succeeded, and we had to pitch the tents on some bare and dirty ground very near a filthy village. The place had a sinister air which I sensed directly we arrived.

I was sitting in a camp chair doing some tapestry, and looking up I saw a terrible apparition passing near me, an ash-smear'd *saddhu* naked except for a tiny bit of rag. He had a black beard, and bright piercing eyes, his hair hung to his waist in a filthy tangled mass, his limbs were like sticks and as he walked he swung one arm violently to and fro; in his other hand he held a human skull; as he went he chanted.

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I sent for the Head Assistant and asked him to find out who this man was, as I did not like his walking through our camp. After a short while he came back and told me that the *saddhu* lived in a grove of trees nearby on the bank of the river: he said that the *saddhu* claimed to be so holy that he was above all castes, and accordingly could (and did) eat anything. (Actually he was lower than all castes, in fact no caste at all.)

My husband passed him one morning at his meal. He had human skulls (craniums) for his plates and cups, and for food he ate anything he found, carrion of all sorts, dead stinking buffaloes, dead pie-dogs, snakes, even the sacred cow!

This *saddhu* had made as his headquarters or home the *ghat* on the river where the dead of the town of Nepalgunj and surrounding villages were brought for burial. Usually Hindus burn their dead on the banks of a river, but this *ghat* is exceptional. Here the dead are put into a dugout, taken out into the river and thrown overboard. The ghoul of a *saddhu* then plunged in and hacked off a joint or a steak from the sinking corpse. Sometimes he succeeded, sometimes he did not.

In the three days we were camped near this *ghat*, three corpses were brought down and the *saddhu* boasted to our orderlies and clerks that he had had a good meal off two of them! I heard of this on our last evening and the very idea of such hellish practices going on within a hundred yards of our tents, and of a carrion-eating cannibal practically cheek-by-jowl with us, so upset me that I could not eat anything at all. We left the camp next day. Our Head Assistant told us that this *saddhu* had migrated from India, and was not a resident of Nepal.

We left Nepal territory at Nepalgunj, and travelled by

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train to Nautanwa, about 100 miles farther east, and then returned to the forbidden land. At Nautanwa, which is just on the frontier, we saw a party of Tibetans, who were anxious to dance for us, but we were in a hurry to reach our camp and had to disappoint them. They wanted to sell us a musk deer which they had brought with them from the high Himalayas in a bamboo basket. It had a fine coat of very stiff hair. The musk pods of these small animals are worth several hundred rupees, and I hoped this one would not be killed for the sake of it.

On this tour we had six elephants with us. One tusker with magnificent tusks, one *makna* (a male without tusks) and four females. On the first march eastwards my husband and I led the procession on the tusker, the Head Assistant and petty officials following behind on the other elephants. Suddenly we heard a shrill trumpeting, and looking back we saw them all stampeding towards us. Our tusker snorted and became restive, but was kept in hand by his *mahawat*. Fortunately, the jungle opened out at this place, and the elephants spread out into some rice fields, their riders clinging on terrified. All except one were soon under control, but this one, with two men on her back and a *mahawat* on her neck, made off at full speed, shaking and rolling as she went; the *mahawat* was beating her frantically with a kukri, and we watched spellbound, wondering what was going to happen. The two men on her back were swaying about, and suddenly one of them, an old man, lost his balance and fell off backwards over the tail; shortly afterwards the other was hurled off sideways, followed by the *mahawat*. The latter picked himself up immediately, and seized hold of the elephant's tail as she went past, and clung to it. We saw

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him being dragged off, but after about half an hour he brought the runaway back.

Two small brown monkeys had started this riot by crossing the road near an elephant we had hired which was not accustomed to the forest. Fortunately no one was badly hurt.

One day a rather unusual incident happened. In front of the camp was a wide stream, and on the farther bank a troupe of *langurs* was playing about in the trees. Presently we saw a village mongrel dog run up and start barking at the monkeys, who looked disdainfully down at him, but one tiny baby that could not have been more than a day or two old had somehow become separated from its mother, and was swaying precariously on a dry half-broken branch uttering plaintive cries. Suddenly the small branch broke, precipitating the baby to the ground, where it was immediately pounced upon by the dog and killed. We fully expected the troupe to come down and attack the dog, as they have been known to attack humans under such circumstances, but curiously enough none of them seemed to take the slightest notice. It all happened so quickly that we had no time to try and save the poor little mite.

Continuing our way eastwards we reached Tribeni, where the mighty Gandak emerges from the hills, a holy place, as such places always are. The banks were covered with signs of encampment made by many thousands of pilgrims, who come to bathe once a year.

With difficulty we found a clean spot on which to put our tents. Fortunately, there was no fair being held at the time. We chose a place right on the bank under some large borang trees, overlooking the pebbly riverbed bordering the river, which is 150 yards wide and

running very deep. On the farther shore trees grew almost to the water's edge.

My husband had important work nine miles up-river and wanted to move the camp up-stream, but after lengthy consultations with boatmen and officials he reluctantly had to give up this idea. There is no road along the bank, nor through the forest, only a tiny path by the edge of the water which necessitates climbing up and down small cliffs and huge rocks. Boats are towed up-stream by boatmen and they float down with the current. As this is very strong, progress up-stream is so slow that it would have taken us two days to travel the nine miles. Finally we arranged to go in dugouts for the day.

The boatmen who owned the dugout are a very interesting and primitive tribe called Bhotes. They have no land or settled homes, but live with their wives and children on the bare sand and rocks of the riverside, usually constructing small temporary shelters of grass and branches, which they desert after a month or two, and move up and down the river to a new site. They cannot count beyond ten, much less read or write; hours and miles mean nothing to them, and they apparently have no words for them. When asked, for example, how far away a place is, or how long it will take to get there, they indicate with upraised hand an arc of the sky, leaving educated man to work out how many hours the sun will take to travel it!

The possessions of these Bhotes, like their wants, are very few and simple. A homespun cotton sheet, and a few rags of clothing, harpoons, hooks and lines, and nets for catching fish—which is their chief means of subsistence—a cooking pot, and a small axe or sickle, and of course their dugout. At catching fish they are amaz-

ingly clever, and employ various methods, including netting, fish-traps, a primitive bamboo rod and line baited with small fish, frogs or some sort of feathered hook. But their favourite method is harpooning, at which their skill is quite incredible. One man quietly works the dugout up the current, while the harpooner stands like a statue on the prow. The barbed iron head is fixed to a straight thin bamboo 8 or 9 feet long (which is also used at other times for punting the dugout). On a bright sunny day with clear water they can see the fish, and strike them too, at a depth of 5 feet or more. How they allow for the angle of refraction in the water we never discovered. We could not even see the fish, let alone kill them, but these men seldom go hungry, and barter their spare fish for rice and grain (one pound of fish for three, sometimes four, pounds of grain.) They also feed on all sorts of jungle fruits and roots, and are particularly fond of the flowers and fruit of the wild banana, that abounds in the jungle near the river banks.

This little community has an alternative means of livelihood to supplement the fishing, when fishing conditions are unfavourable. In the broad dry bed of the Gandak are occasional patches and pockets of rust-coloured sand, in which traces of gold are found. The Bhotes and their families wash the sand, and by strenuous work can obtain about 12 annas' (one shilling) worth of gold in a day. By these devious means, fishing, washing gold, and collecting edible jungle products, these cheery, simple and unspoilt people survive and indeed thrive. For no consideration will they work for wages, or as labourers.

We started up-stream in the early morning in six dugouts, each paddled or poled by two men and carrying one passenger each. The view was enthralling, and I gasped

when the mountains, which tower into the sky at the head of the valley, came into view. We saw three peaks of over 26,000 feet, and they seemed to be only just the other side of the near hills, although they must have been 50 miles away.

The water is a jade-green colour, possibly owing to the bottom being covered by vast quantities of green weed; there are stretches of slowly-flowing deep water interspersed with rapids where the rush and splash of the water can be heard some way off. Primeval virgin forests grow almost to the river's edge, but in places there are precipitous sandstone cliffs down which many small streams have cut gulleys where wild banana trees grow in profusion. On the rocks grow maidenhair ferns of a bright emerald-green.

Our dugouts crept along the banks so as to avoid the strong current; the men sometimes poled, sometimes they pushed along with one foot in the water, and where it was very deep they used paddles. In the rapids they waded and pulled the dugouts along. We saw some duck swimming near the bank, so my husband stalked them in his dugout, and brought down a right and left as they rose over the water. The birds fell in the river, neither quite dead, and a terrific chase began, the dugouts chasing the birds down a rapid. The face of my husband's Head Assistant wore an agonised expression as his dugout bobbed about, shipping water over the bows. The duck were both retrieved, and we went on our way.

Near the water's edge we passed many stretches of sand where we saw crocodiles, nearly all of the fish-eating type, basking in the sun. I had never seen so many crocodiles in one day. They lay like a black carpet on the sand, about thirty or forty of them, and as we drew near they

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moved in a solid mass into the water and dived deeply. In another place we saw seven or eight baby crocs not more than four feet in length. They looked very thin and resembled sticks of wood.

We found the forest my husband wanted to see, where the gorge of the river opens into a broad and beautiful valley, a land of virgin forest where live wild elephants and many rhino. We had our lunch on the edge of the jungle, and then my husband set off to climb a small hill which commanded a bird's-eye view.

Our voyage down-stream was accomplished in two and a half hours as compared with the five and a half we had taken for the journey up. We no longer crept along the banks in single file but glided swiftly in the current, shooting the rapids, sometimes six abreast. It was a marvellous journey.

Not far from our camp, on the farther side of the river, my husband found a most interesting place called Sitamari, and later insisted on taking me to see it. Buried away in the depth of the primeval sal forest we suddenly came upon traces of a dead and forgotten city. Some excavations had been carried out years ago, and a number of exquisitely carved stone figures of the god Vishnu were discovered, and had been erected in a row, which was the first thing to catch our eyes. These figures, which stood from 4 to 6 feet high, had been carved out of a black basaltic rock, which occurs nowhere locally, and may have been brought from Central India. With these carvings were also some much older, and worn stone figures, which we were told later had been dug from a much deeper level, and were pre-Buddha, probably 3,000 years old!

Near these figures we saw a small stone bathing-pool,

alongside which was an ancient dried-up brick well. There were numerous traces of old houses or dwellings, mostly rectangular in shape and built of small bricks, some of which had evidently been partially excavated; but there were also mounds and humps which I thought might be worth excavating. I longed to have some knowledge of archæology, and time to explore this ancient site of human habitation, regarding the history of which no legend or story seems to have survived. Round about were the marks of wild jungle life. Beneath the towering sal trees, festooned with gigantic climbers, it was cool and pleasant, and there were abundant marks of *sambar* and the little barking deer, while not many days ago a tiger had come here and left his characteristic scratchings.

If old Omar had ever visited Sitamari, he might have written:—

They say the tiger and the sambar keep
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep,
And Bahram—that great Hunter—the wild deer
Stamp o'er his head—but cannot break his sleep.

From Tribeni we had to travel back to Kathmandu. To reach the railway we had to cross the river and then travel 30 miles by road. This sounds simple enough, but proved to be the reverse, and we had to overcome considerable difficulty. We had twenty carts, which had to be taken over the river, and this necessitated taking off the wheels before the carts were put on the boats, two on each boat. The bullocks, forty of them, had to swim the 150 yards, which they did not like at all. They kept trying to turn back, but men followed them in dugouts and after much difficulty got them across. On the far side the carts were assembled and our luggage loaded, and

they set off on the 30-mile trek to the railway. They lost the way many times, and took several days on the journey.

One of the Forest contractors offered to motor Evelyn and myself, the three clerks, and two servants to the railway town, where he said he had a nice rest-house in which we could stay while we were waiting for the train. We accepted the offer, and went in two cars, one a modern Ford de luxe, the other a genuine old Tin Lizzie, with tiny tyres and high clearance. Krishna was most scornful of this, saying "It must be forty years old!" Anyhow it chugged along carrying four passengers and piles of luggage.

On our way back to Kathmandu we saw thousands of pilgrims returning from the pilgrimage to Pashupatti. We first became aware of them at Raxaul. As our train drew up, crowds and hordes of them tried to get on board, and it was only with difficulty that we managed to alight. The third-class carriages were filled immediately, the people were packed like sardines, and how they had room to breathe was a marvel. Only a fraction of the crowd could find room, the rest were left behind, yelling and shouting. Some of them had been in the station for days.

When we reached the Legation bungalow, half a mile away, we could still hear the uproar, which continued most of the night. Next day we saw more pilgrims coming down to Raxaul from Amlekhganj on the Nepal line. The carriages and goods wagons were a seething mass of *saddhus*, and men and women of all ages—there were even people sitting all over the engine, on the couplings between the carriages, hanging out of the windows, and perched on the roofs of the carriages; in fact the train looked like an enormous caterpillar composed of human beings!

On the path over the mountains we met more and more pilgrims. The *saddhus* were mostly naked and ash-smeared, their hair all matted and filthy. They have no money and beg for a living. One of them said to my husband, in English, "Would you very kindly give me a cigarette?" Surprised, Evelyn gave him one and said, "You speak good English!" "Yes," said the *saddhu*, "I used to be on the staff of the *Statesman* in Calcutta, and then I gave it up to become a *saddhu*."

Some of the pilgrims were very old men and women, some were lame, and I saw one man with one leg helping himself along with a long stick. Another could only just put one foot a few inches before the other foot. There were small children and women carrying tiny babies. They all looked weary and footsore.

It was amazing to think that these people had walked, mostly barefoot, over the rocky and stony road through the mountains for so many miles. While they are in Nepal His Highness the Maharaja feeds them all, which must cost a large sum of money.

We spent the night at Sisaghari, as usual, on the journey up. Next day we started early, and on the top of the Sisapani pass we had a magnificent view of the high snows. Owing to recent storms the snow line was low on the mountains, which made them look higher than ever; the sky was a deep blue against which the snow peaks glistened in the sun, the glaciers showing up ice-blue.

The human stream of pilgrims still continued. My husband passed one man lying by the wayside. He was gasping painfully, and a few moments later died. These people are happy to die on a pilgrimage. They believe if death so overtakes them, they go straight to their heaven.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Chitawan

THE following description of Chitawan is taken from my husband's book *Big Game Shooting in Nepal*.

"Chitawan! The famous big-game reserve of Nepal and one of the most beautiful places in the world. Chitawan! An area of mystery and romance, known by repute to so many men, but seen by so few. Chitawan! A name synonymous (to those who know) with the acme of big-game shooting, reserved for the sport of the Maharaja and his distinguished guests, an Emperor, a Prince, a Viceroy. The writer, perhaps alone amongst Europeans, has been privileged to tour extensively throughout this lovely tract, and can thus give a first-hand description of it, its fauna and flora, its geology and scenery, its scattered jungle villages and tribes.

"The Rapti river, rising in the Mahabharat range at 7,000 feet near Chisapani Garhi on the main road to the valley of Nepal, flows southwards for a dozen miles parallel to the motor road in a narrow valley bordered with steep, sometimes precipitous mountains, until it comes to a hamlet called Suparitar. Here the scenery and flora change abruptly with the crossing of the great Himalayan fault that divides the younger Siwalik formations from the older Himalayan rocks, the great fault that runs for 2,000 miles and more from the Brahmaputra valley to the Indus.

"An undulating transverse valley runs east and west, four or five miles broad, and the Rapti, joined by two small

rivers, leaves the road and turns west, at the hamlet of Hetaura, where His Highness has an imposing shooting-box. From Hetaura this wild and lovely river flows due west for nearly 60 miles before it falls into the Narayani, or Great Gandak river, one of the major rivers of Himal. To the north the valley is bounded by a line of Siwalik hills, densely forested with sal, and backed by tier on tier of the Mahabharat range. To the south is the Churia range, rising 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the valley level, of Siwalik formation.

"This Churia range is completely uninhabited by man, clothed with primeval forests of sal and pine and bhabar grass, a wild medley of broken ground, with steep precipitous slopes and dry, pebbly streambeds bordered with other grasses, the ultimate home of tiger, leopard, wild dog, and the deer—sambar, chital, barking deer—on which they prey and live. In Chitawan the range is duplicated by a double line of hills with the Reu river (the chief tributary of the Rapti) between. Thus this famous shooting preserve is roughly pear-shaped, four or five miles broad at the eastern end at Hetaura, widening to twenty miles or more at the western and covering in all nearly 1,000 square miles.

"The lower well-drained slopes of the valley are a continuous belt of virgin sal forest, containing stretches of the most magnificent sal in the world, gigantic trees towering up 160 feet, with here and there a gap in the canopy where a monster tree has fallen and lies rotting on the ground (no timber fellings have ever been permitted in this tract of country). Near the banks of the rivers and streams and in the poorly-drained savannahs the dark sal forest gives place to riverain forests of a different type, with semal and khair trees standing up in a

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smother of tremendous grasses, the home of uncounted rhino, and of occasional wandering herds of wild elephants. On the western border for over 20 miles flows the Gandak river, which in monsoon floods occasionally washes a live rhino into India, to the excitement of the sportsmen there. In the time of Maharaja Chandra, attempts were made to colonise Hetaura and the upper parts of the valley with Bhotes and other tribes, and land was given here to the emancipated slaves. But the "awal", the dreaded malignant malaria, which is rampant through all the basin from March to November, spoilt the attempt. But in the centre of the Dun are a number of villages and fertile cultivation of the Tharus.

"Camping in this locality in the early cold weather, when the rice fields are ripening, is an unforgettable experience. At nightfall the woolly evening mist forms, enveloping the little encampment in silence and darkness. Sometime afterwards one often hears the footsteps and breathing of a rhino moving calmly from the riverain savannah towards the rice fields for his nightly meal. He pauses, curious but suspicious, to inspect the tent into which he has nearly blundered, and then moves on. Half an hour later a burst of yelling and a clatter of tins reveal the watchful Tharus protecting their fields from the marauder, to be repeated at intervals as the night advances. In the early morning the calling of rhinos to one another in the savannah forest behind mingles with the ringing alarm call of deer at the glimpse of a hunting tiger, and the piercing calls of swarms of peafowl, sailing down from their roosting places for their daily feed in the rice fields.

"Then the morning sun dissipates the mist, and from one's bed an amazing panorama becomes visible. The flat plain of rice fields, dotted here and there with a

mango grove and a cluster of Tharu huts, spreads for several miles northwards to the forest-clad hills and the dark backing of Mahabharat beyond. Behind Mahabharat again, floating in the sky, ethereal, glowing like pink pearls in the morning sun, tower at close range the great giants of Himalaya, the eternal snows 'changeless since the world's beginning, but changing to every mood of sun and cloud.' There is no such view to equal this in all the Himalayas, and so in all the world.

At Kasra, farther down the Rapti valley, in the time of Maharaja Chandra, King George V had a camp and shoot in 1911-1912 at which a record bag was made (39 tigers, 18 rhinos, 4 bears and several leopards, in 11 days.) Here also Maharaja Joodha has shown grand sport to many distinguished guests."

It was to this wonderful country that we set off for a tour one January. Neither my husband nor I felt very fit, and I was a little anxious at going off into the blue. In the day I forgot my fears, but at night I would lie awake and worry over what would happen if either of us fell ill so far away from help.

Our first camp was at Simra, a tiny village on the Nepal railway situated just where the line leaves the cultivated plain and enters the forest. This forest stretches for 10 miles in a wide belt, and is entirely waterless except for a pipe-line laid down by some Rani before the railway was built. She apparently felt sorry for travellers who had to journey so far in the hot weather without water. The pipe flows into a pool where many animals come to drink at night. We heard a leopard roaring near our tents in the early morning.

Our first few marches lay westwards through Terai

country, the road, or rather track, passing now through dense forest before emerging into open village lands and savannahs, and crossing numerous swamps and Terai streams. This tract of country is very malarious even in the cold weather. As usual, we gave the servants quinine every few days, but several of them were down with malaria. First the washerman, then Krishna and the cook. Quinine appears to react on them more vigorously than it does on Europeans, which is fortunate.

Our third march was long and tedious. My husband, who was suffering from lumbago, found riding on an elephant very painful, and was obliged to walk. His temper was not improved when he found that our guide had taken us a long way round, entailing at least four extra miles. The guide was a Forest guard and he was supposed to know the country, but he frankly admitted that he never went into the forest, which was far too dangerous, being full of tigers, bears and wild elephants!

The cartmen were annoying. No sooner were their carts loaded up than they started to oil the wheels, having neglected to do so while they had been sitting idle; this at last accomplished, they set off, only to stop at the first stream to clean their teeth. We came upon the whole cavalcade drawn up by the water, the cartmen busy with their sticks cleaning their teeth, which glistened white and repaid them for their trouble. But in consequence our camp was not pitched till after sunset.

We found it difficult to find a site for the tents in the dense forest. A gang of coolies cleared a space by hacking down small trees and shrubs. As usual we were objects of curiosity, and my knitting aroused great interest. The cook was often surrounded by a crowd who watched his culinary efforts with awe, and one day I was amused to

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see one of the jungly onlookers beating up some eggs.

We marched on westwards, our track following the frontier between Nepal and India, which here is a line cut through the forest with occasional pillars. We camped at Bikna Tori on a fine site used by Viceroy's when they shoot in Nepal.

As our cook was still down with fever the butler did the cooking for a few days, with disastrous results to my teeth. His cutlets were covered with a granite-like substance which broke one of my back teeth in half. As the nearest dentist was in Calcutta, many days' journey away, this was a serious matter, but being anxious not to miss the tour I decided to carry on as best I could with a jagged tooth. I tried various things to cover up the sharp pieces, but could not manage to do it till I recalled that I had a file in my manicure set. It had a pointed end which I had to cover with cotton-wool before it could be used in my mouth. Evelyn had to act as dentist, and he filed away for the best part of an hour, until the jagged piece of my tooth was more or less rounded off, and I had great relief. His expression while doing this was so comic that I could not help laughing, which delayed the proceedings, as every time I laughed the cotton-wool round the point of the file fell off, and had to be tied on again. At the end of the tour I had to go to Calcutta at a cost of 500 rupees, so the butler's cutlet became very expensive.

After Bikna Tori we toured through some of the finest Terai forest of Nepal, where the Maharaja's distinguished guests have been to shoot. When these august people arrive, motor roads are made, and they travel in two hours the distance we journeyed in four or five days.

On the second day out of Bikna Tori we came to a camp in the jungle where *keddah* operations were being carried

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out. There were 32 elephants, some of them large tuskers. A few days previously a female elephant had been captured with her tiny baby, and the officer in charge of the operations took us to see them. The mother was tied to two large tuskers with a rope round her neck, one end attached to each male; the rope was as thick as a ship's cable and about 15 yards long on each side. Each of the tuskers had a man on his back controlling him, and nearby stood two more tuskers in case they should be needed. We were not allowed to approach nearer than 20 yards. The mother elephant struggled from time to time to free herself, lurching away and being pulled up by the taut rope. Sometimes she kicked up large pieces of earth. It seemed a miracle that she did not hurt the little calf, who was usually pottering about under her belly. He was the sweetest little thing, about a month old according to the *mahawats*; he looked rather like a large pig; he had a tiny trunk and when he had an opportunity he helped himself to a meal. Our presence, however, agitated the captive so that she strained more strongly at the rope. I asked if the cable ever broke and was told it did sometimes! The elephant men were showing signs of anxiety, so we reluctantly tore ourselves away. A captive is tied up like this for a month, after which she is more or less tame.

In this part of the jungle there are a number of small herds varying in size from ten to thirty elephants. We camped in the heart of this elephant country, a small patch of jungle being cleared for our camp.

About midnight we were awakened by a tremendous hullabaloo. One of these small herds had, by accident or intentionally, visited our encampment; there was shrill trumpeting mingled with the shouts of our elephant men

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and camp followers, who were all busy throwing dry grass on the camp fires to frighten the herd away. The clerks felt their tent shake as an elephant brushed against the ropes. There were two tuskers, three or four females, and a couple of young ones whose high piping voices could easily be distinguished.

My husband rushed out of our tent to see what was happening, leaving me alone inside. I did not feel at all safe, so I put on a coat and went and stood by a camp fire. After about two hours the herd moved off, and the camp went to sleep again. It was thrilling while it lasted. If the herd had stampeded they could have gone through our tents like paper hoops.

Next day we marched on deeper into the elephant country. We were in the Reu Valley; our road passed through large patches of the most gigantic grasses twice the height of an elephant, where the Head Assistant told us many rhino lived. He said that a month earlier a wandering pedlar had suddenly met a rogue elephant and had been killed by him, and by the side of the road we saw the unfortunate man's skull. Just then we heard the noise of a tree being broken by an elephant and we got our rifles ready, but he did not molest us.

The havildar had been clamouring for some venison, saying he was fading away with so much hard work, marching nearly every day, and only meat would restore him, so I went out to hunt for more meat for the camp. I went on a tall female elephant whose *mahawat* had the reputation of knowing the jungles well. We wandered through seas of tall grass, all green and tawny brown, perfect camouflage for the tigers. I only saw one *sambar* hind, but a wild boar got up near us, and ran off ahead of the elephants. As the meat is considered a great delicacy

by the Nepalese I shot him. The *mahawat* lamented that we could not find a *sambar* stag, for although he liked wild boar, a *sambar* is a much bigger animal, and would provide so much more meat for our large camp.

Our next march was into the famous Chitawan Valley. We camped at Khasra, which has a superb view. One looks across a wide valley of gigantic grasses and forest to the Mahabharat hills, beyond which tower up the snow mountains.

In these tall grasses live many rhino, very strictly preserved by the Nepalese Government. Armed sepoy, living in outposts in the forest, guard the valley. A rhinoceros is much prized for its horn, which is valued at £100-150, being used as an aphrodisiac throughout India. If left unguarded, the rhino would certainly be poached and soon exterminated as they have been over most of South-East Asia.

Next morning my husband had one of the excitements of his life, and I regret very much that I was not with him. Having crossed the Rapti river and inspected some forest, he came on to a plain with most of the grass burnt off, but with patches left unburnt here and there near a Tharu village. It looked a grand place for a black partridge, and one or two were calling, so he and Krishna dismounted from the elephant to try and shoot a brace. He had successfully bagged one and lost another, which he was searching for in a narrow band of unburned grass running alongside a field of mustard. Suddenly, 40 or 50 yards away, a series of extraordinary noises, grunts and bellows were heard approaching. My husband and Krishna were arguing whether the noise was due to buffaloes, or bullocks, or what, when the point was solved by the appearance of two enormous rhino about twelve yards away!

The searchers hastily scrambled across the rhino ditch surrounding the mustard field, but as they felt very exposed and unsafe out in the open, they scrambled back again and climbed up a convenient tree. This appeared to disturb the rhino, now about six yards away, and they went away towards the village. My husband had a good view of the pair from the top of the tree as they wandered through more mustard fields, creating much excitement among the villagers who were working in the crops. The rhino then circled round into the burnt and unburnt grass area in the direction of the camp, and in about twenty minutes they were lost to view.

Meanwhile the *mahawat* on the elephant had seen the rhino in the mustard fields, and brought his elephant up to the tree in which his master and Krishna had taken refuge. After some discussion they decided to return to camp along a cart-track, although it followed the route taken by the rhinos. They had gone about 200 yards and were passing a small patch of tall unburnt grass about 30 yards away when without warning the larger of the two rhino charged straight at the elephant like a runaway tank.

Very few elephants will stand up to a charging rhino, and the elephant in question was a rather timid young tusker. Expecting him to bolt, my husband clung to the *mahawat*, and Krishna clung to his master, shouting to him to shoot; but as Evelyn had only a gun and a number 6 shot, and in any case dared not release his hold on the *mahawat*, he did nothing but hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Unexpectedly, the young tusker stood firm, and the rhino, when about five yards from the flank of the elephant, turned abruptly and galloped off behind its tail. But for

that providential turn, the elephant would have been caught in its side by some two tons of matter moving at about twenty miles an hour. The impact would undoubtedly have overthrown the elephant, with fatal results for itself and its three riders.

Having been treed by a rhino, and then charged by one—all in the space of half an hour—my husband had had enough excitement and decided to call it a day. He came back to camp. Krishna decided to make something more than a day of it, and pleading how sorry his old mother would be if anything happened to him, begged that he might not be taken into those rhino-infested areas again.

We marched on across the Rapti Valley, travelling almost due north to Narayangarh. We had a long, tiring day, as the valley is ten miles wide at this part, and our path, winding as it did, was nearly fifteen miles. The country we traversed consisted mostly of grasses, but occasionally we passed a village surrounded by rice fields. The crops had been cut, so there were no rhino to be seen, although their fresh footprints could be detected in the fields.

The villagers dig enormous trenches, 6 feet deep and 6 feet wide, round their land in an attempt, generally futile, to keep out the rhino.

Numerous black partridge rose out of the grass, but we had no time for shooting that day. The view of the mountains was magnificent. We had Manaslu (26,700 feet) directly ahead of us towering up into the sky. It looked only twenty miles away but was in reality about fifty.

We headed due north towards the low outer hills, where our camp was pitched on the bank of the Gandak

river, which makes its way from glaciers and eternal snows through terrific gorges. A place had to be cut out of the jungle for our tents, and an army of coolies hewed down trees and cut shrubs. They even cleared a vista to the river's edge, so that we could enjoy the beautiful view. We were again in country never before visited by Europeans.

One afternoon a cow-herd came into the camp to tell us that one of his calves had just been killed by a leopard. It was four o'clock before we were able to collect the elephants and start. The cow-herd guided us to the place where the kill had taken place; it was on a plateau of tall grass partly burnt and dotted with trees. We could see a drag through the grass, which to our minds looked more like a tiger's work, but the boy was positive it was a leopard; he said he had seen it, and it was yellow and white with spots.

Leaving the boy we followed the drag, and found no calf, but a full-grown black bullock, hardly eaten. It all looked very promising. We *ghoomed* around for a short while, but the grass was so thick and tall that we decided it would be impossible to see a leopard even if it were quite close. My husband fixed up a makeshift *machan* of our wooden bath-mat, in a convenient tree. I sat up, and although I saw nothing I had plenty of thrills. I heard footsteps behind me several times, or thought I did, but I realised later that the noise was caused by tiny birds, about the size of wrens, who made more noise among the dry leaves than half a dozen leopards would have done.

I returned to the camp at sunset and decided to try again next day. We left the camp at one o'clock. On our way we passed some mustard fields in which we saw at least a hundred peafowl. The jungle through which

CHITAWAN

we passed was bright with various flowering shrubs, colebrookia with its coral-like flowers, purple indigofera, and the sweet-smelling clerodendron with its flowers like chestnut blooms.

We found the kill had been dragged farther, more had been eaten, and the remainder covered up with grass. My husband fixed my *machan* in another tree, and I settled down for a good long sit-up.

I refused to let the noises of the birds excite me; but one hopeful sign was that though many crows were flying about not one of them descended on to the kill.

At half-past four I was growing a little weary when suddenly I noticed a movement in the grass on my right. I waited tensely, then saw a great mass of yellow and could make out the form of a tiger lying down. We had not asked His Highness the Maharaja for permission to shoot any tiger, so it was impossible for me to fire. I do not know how the tiger had come so near, for I had never heard a sound. I do not know how long he had been there.

After a time he sat up and I saw him quite plainly. He was about thirty yards away, but slightly screened by a bush with feathery leaves. I watched him for over an hour. Sometimes he yawned, and then he would lie down and have a nap.

My husband had said that he would come for me at six, and soon I heard his shout. I did not answer, hoping that he would not come and disturb the tiger. At last the beast stood up. He was a magnificent specimen. He stalked slowly towards the kill, looking terrific. My husband shouted again, and I saw the tiger prick up his ears and look in the direction of the noise. He was not worried, and stood presenting a target I could not have

TIGER LADY

missed. Then he moved slowly away. Obviously he was not hungry, and perhaps wished to have a drink at the stream nearby. I watched him till he disappeared in the grass, then I shouted for Evelyn to come up. He arrived in about five minutes, and as he was approaching my tree he saw the tiger in the grass only a few yards away from the elephant.

We were moving down the river next day or I should have stayed until darkness hoping to see the tiger return to his kill. It is thrilling to see a close-up of a fine tiger even if you have no intention of shooting it.

The following day we did our first move down the Gandak river in dugouts, of which we had a fleet of ten. Our tents and luggage went in carts along the bank. We fished all likely places on the way down, but we never saw a fish. We shot down one fierce rapid, the water splashing aboard. If I had not had great confidence in my crew I should have been really alarmed. We landed on a pebbly island with a gorgeous run on either side, but there were no fish. We saw the footprints of a huge rhino that had been on the island recently.

We camped in the forest on the high bank of the river. A clearing had been made for us. The next morning, when I was interviewing the cook, I heard shouts of "*Gaendar, gaendar*" (rhino, rhino).

We went to the bank of the river, and there on the opposite side was a huge bull rhino having a drink. His thirst quenched, he wandered along the bank in full view, and then proceeded to swim the river, which is at least 200 yards wide. It was a wonderful sight to see him wade in deeper and deeper until he began to swim and we could see only his ears and his very large horn. Chiri and some of the camp men ran down our bank to try and

turn him back, but he took no notice, and on landing he trotted off into the jungle near our camp.

In the evening another rhino came for a drink—a younger one and more skittish. We watched him prancing and gambolling about like a kid.

That night, after having baths and listening to the news and commentary on the radio, we called for dinner and made our way into the little dining-tent.

We had just started on our soup when a terrific noise came from the kitchen tent. Men were shouting and beating tins frantically. We jumped up and looked out to see what all the excitement was about, and there between our tent and the kitchen, silhouetted in the glow of the camp fire, was a gigantic animal. It stood stock-still. My husband turned on his torch, which lit up the head of a big bull rhinoceros—probably the same one that I had seen swimming the river in the daytime.

Our cook and butler had at first thought it was a buffalo wandering into the camp, and they had tried to shoo it off by beating on the frying-pan. When they realised it was a rhino, they had hastily retired towards the kitchen fire, redoubling their clamour.

My husband got his gun and fired a shot into the air, whereupon the huge animal lumbered away into the darkness and we resumed our disturbed dinner.

A quarter of an hour later, the local Forest officer and some of his staff, who were camped more than half a mile away, arrived in a great state of agitation. They had heard the shot and feared a rhino had attacked the camp.

Almost simultaneously a terrific din arose from the Tharu village nearby, where apparently the rhino had decided to get his evening meal of rice. After all these excitements, however, there was peace for the rest of the

night; but in the morning we could hear several rhino calling in the high grass on the other side of the river.

As there were no fish to be caught, I amused myself by going up and down the river in a dugout armed with a rifle and a gun. There were many Brahminy duck, which I stalked and shot as they flew off. These duck generally go about in pairs, and seem devoted to each other. When one is dropped, the mate is greatly concerned and flies around in a frenzied way uttering loud quacks.

There were crocodiles of both sorts in many places, and these I stalked. I usually landed from the dugout and approached on foot. Sometimes I crawled on all fours so as to get within easy shot.

One evening Bir Bahadur and I landed from our dugout and crept through the forest which bordered the river. We crawled to the bank and, peering below us, saw about twenty crocodiles, most of them half in the water. There was one evil-looking mugger (man-eating species) lying on the bank about one foot from the water. I waited for half an hour hoping some more would come farther up the bank, but they seemed disinclined to leave the water's edge. I could hear them calling to each other with the funny rattling sound they make: some of them had their mouths wide open, and some of them lay in groups across each other. In the water I could see others just below the surface, their eyes and snouts just visible.

After half an hour I decided to have a shot at the man-eater, about one hundred yards away. I took careful aim and was delighted to see I had hit him. He lay prostrate, and I thought I had bagged him. All the others had disappeared in a flash. Bir Bahadur and I got up and started down the bank when I saw the monster wriggle painfully and manage to squirm into the water and dis-

appear. We called up the dugout and went to the place where he had submerged, but he had vanished. We probed about with long poles, but there was no trace of him. My husband said I should have got another shot in as he lay as if dead.

Our fourth camp down the river was on a side branch of the Gandak as there was no suitable ground on which to camp by the main river. We hunted about for a site, and had chosen one when Chiri came dashing up to say there was a dead man lying in the water, and a dead horse. We hastily pushed off elsewhere, but could not find a nice place. The local Forest guard told us that there were many rhino about, and that they could sometimes be seen in herds of twenty or thirty. Our clerks were so alarmed that they sat up all night by a huge bonfire, and they also had a petromax lamp. We did not believe this tale, but we kept a gun handy.

We had just gone to bed when we heard heavy footsteps near the tent. My husband had his gun, but mine was under my bed. In the pitch-darkness I got out of bed and groped for my gun case. Having found it I tried to put up my gun in the dark. Even in daylight it is a difficult gun to fit, and in the darkness I made an awful clatter. All the time my husband was urging me to be quiet.

The rhinos (we discovered next morning that two were there) were near us for nearly an hour. They splashed about in the river, making a great noise. We stayed awake until they moved off, each of us with a loaded gun by our bedside. The guns, of course, were only to make a noise in case the rhinos came too close or tripped over our tent ropes.

Near our camp was a small copse of sal: the elephant men thought that it would be a nice place to pitch their

tents, but the local forest people warned them that a goddess lived there, and that if the elephants stayed near it they would all die next day, also any men with them, so they had to find other quarters. No one was daring enough to test the truth of this.

We continued down-stream until we reached Tamaspur, where we had a wonderful camp. We had visited this place two years before, and I have described how we reached it in dugouts from Tribeni in a previous chapter. Then, we had thought we had reached the edge of the world. Now, coming from so far up river, we thought we were nearing civilisation again. We camped a mile from the river on a park-like place at the edge of a huge forest. There was plenty of game, and I had some shooting. We had a final try for some fish, but it was quite hopeless, and during our fifty-mile march down the Gandak we never saw a fish and never had a bite.

Our whole camp moved down-stream to Tribeni in a fleet of three dugouts and two large country boats. The servants and camp followers sang and beat tom-toms as the boats glided along. We saw many crocodiles. At one spot, I was near the bank in my dugout and saw a monster within five yards of me. His eyes and snout were just above water. I fired at a duck just as my husband was opposite this crocodile, which dived into the river, nearly upsetting his dugout, to the alarm of the crew.

At Tribeni we bid farewell to our dugout men. They were grateful for the money we paid them. I do not suppose they had ever seen so many rupees before.

We reached the railway at Bagaha. It seemed strange to see a train again. There was a party of Tibetans in the station, very ruddy of face, with long pigtailed. They wore high boots made of felt, and their clothes were made of

cloth spun from wool of their own sheep. It was very hot in the sun, and the heat was altogether too much for these men, dressed for an altitude of 10,000 feet. They had stripped to the waist, tying their coats round themselves. They had several things for sale, blankets, cloth and skins.

A party of these Tibetans travelled on our train. They were going to Calcutta to sell their bundles of skins. At one small station there was a heap of stones lying near the platform. My husband, being a keen geologist, descended from our carriage and crossed the line to see if there were any fossils among the stones. He was followed by one of our orderlies, and they began hunting for fossils. The Tibetans, full of curiosity, joined them, and soon all the passengers from the train turned up. The Tibetans enquired what we were searching for and Krishna replied that he was searching for gold. Excitement became intense, and everyone began rushing about collecting pocketsful of stones. The train began to whistle frantically, but no one was in a hurry and it was some time before everyone had taken their seats and we resumed our journey to Raxaul on our way back to Kathmandu.

CONCLUSION

WE were very happy in Nepal and I was very sad when my husband decided it was time he retired for good. He had not been to Europe for over ten years, and he wanted to settle down in England while he could still enjoy an active life. Bill was back in Burma, and John had qualified as a doctor and was serving in the Royal Navy.

We had a short tour in the jungles before we left, and then said goodbye to our faithful servants and our beloved haunts, to the elephants and the way of life we had lived for 36 years.

Although I shall never see them again, in my dreams I still race down foaming rapids in flimsy dugouts, or roam through trackless forests on an elephant with Bisharat Ali. The call of the wild is in my soul, and will remain there always.

Indeed, as I look back over the many years I spent as the wife of a Forest officer in India, I no longer wonder if I could not have spent them in a more happy and pleasant sort of way.

THE END